NO TITLE-PAGE & INDEX ISSUED

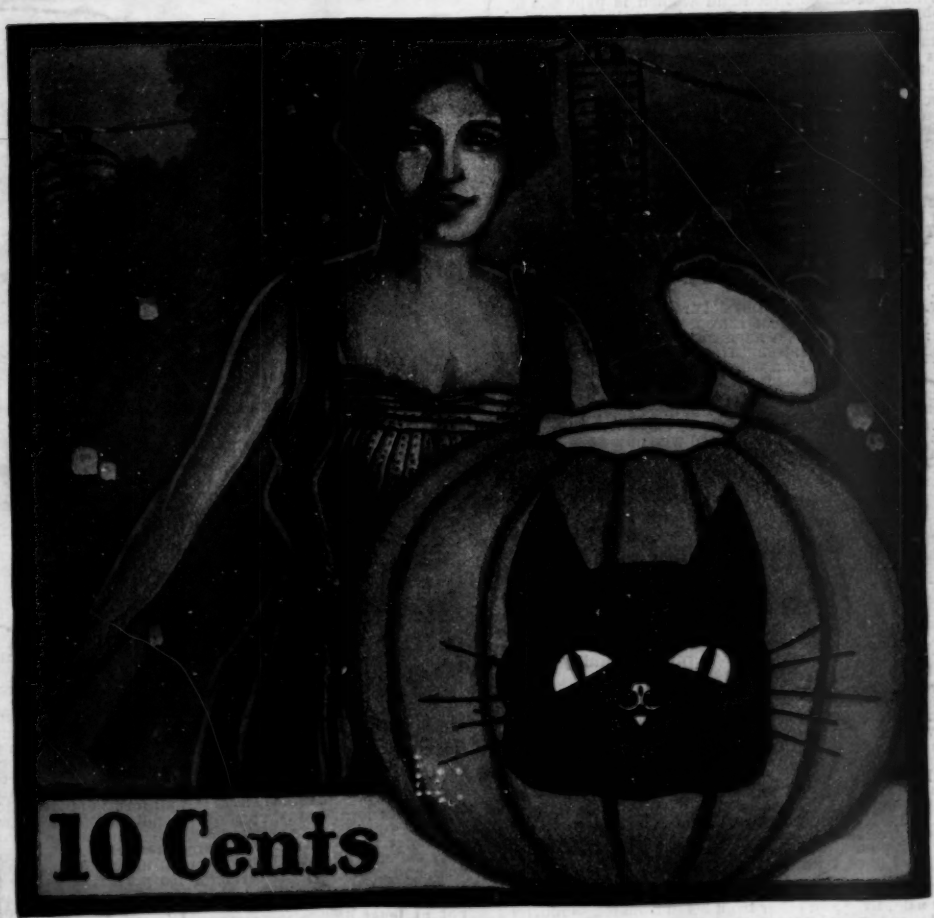
OCT -1 1917

October

The Black Cat

1917

Clever Short Stories



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Say Physicians—Quickly Puts Roses Into the Cheeks of Women and Most Astonishing Youthful Vitality Into the Veins of Men—It Often Increases the Strength and Endurance of Delicate, Nervous "Run Down" Folks 100 Per Cent in Two Weeks' Time.

Opinion of Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City

SINCE the remarkable discovery of organic iron, Nuxated Iron or "Fer Nuxate" as the French call it, has taken the country by storm, it is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually are taking it in this country alone. Most astonishing results are reported from its use by both physicians and laymen. So much so that doctors predict that we shall soon have a new age of far more beautiful, rosy-cheeked women and vigorous iron men.

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author, when interviewed on this subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men, without iron." Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If the people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or rundown, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth.

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times a day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And

this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old form of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prizefighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, visiting surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such a great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

OCT -1 1917

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The Black Cat

VOL. XXIII. No. 1 OCTOBER, 1917 10c. a COPY. $1.00 a YEAR

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ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY
Salem, Mass.
Entered at the Post-Office at Salem, Mass. as second-class matter.
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to any one who supplies us with the name of the film, the company producing it and the theatre and date on which it was seen, of any photoplay based on a story that has at any time been published in THE BLACK CAT, provided it is a story of which we have not sold photoplay rights. Very few such rights have been sold by us and we believe that hundreds of photoplays now being shown all over the country are based on BLACK CAT stories without right to do so.

Read THE BLACK CAT and keep your eyes open, it may make money for you.

THE BLACK CAT, - - - SALEM, MASS.

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

"By the way," writes the member from Duluth, "the best Black Cat stories are never love stories; the love element is handled too cold-bloodedly." That is true. The Black Cat rarely publishes a story that can be called an out-and-out love story, one that sends such a voltage of sentiment over the reader's emotional wires that he cannot let go. There was one good love story, *Every Man*, by Anna Brownell Dunaway, in the September Black Cat. Next month, there will be another, with an emotional appeal of even higher voltage, and it shall be the first story in the number. By all the laws of magazine making, it should be published in June, for it is a Commencement story. We shall not wait until June because we believe that it is too good to keep in a cold storage manuscript safe all winter; and, besides, a little thing like cool November days, with thoughts of Thanksgiving, shall not interfere with our belated appreciation of summer styles in fiction. The club is not the usual place for announcements; but just this once, we will trespass long enough to call the readers' attention to *"The Rosemary of Remembrance,"* by Margaret Dean Stevens, to appear in the November number.

Members should note also that, beginning with this contest, there will be a change in the method of awarding prizes. (See page 45.)

Chart Pitt, author of the story *The Law of the Abalone*, was the winner of the $25 prize in the July contest. The $5 prize winners were Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Alfred E. Ross, New Haven, Conn.; Mrs. Lelia Davis, Richmond, Va.; Mrs. Minne Castner, Seattle, Wash.; Albert E. Brager, Philadelphia, Pa. Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest..

The Law of the Abalone is primarily a story of setting; as in Stevenson's "The Merry Men," it is the influence of environment upon the character which forms the theme of the story. The long Pacific, stretching itself between the gray rocks of the coast and the native hills of Lee Tong, forms the atmosphere of the story, which is sustained throughout. One who has never seen the Pacific is made to feel that there is a certain fidelity to fact and sensitiveness to local color. One hears the "heartless whining of the winds," smells the fetid stench of the abolone heap and the perfumed breezes from the East, sees the "smashing" California coast, and feels the agony of the shrinking, cowardly soul of Lee Tong as he waits for the slow certain death. One obscure point in the story is how Long Sing, with both hands caught by the mollusk, was yet able to amputate his fingers. The reader is lead to suppose that both men have both hands caught in the giant shell, and this supposition is sustained by the fact that the big man asks the little one to remove his knife from his belt with his teeth. Aside from this defect, the story is perfect in every detail. The situations are logical and in keeping with the tone of the setting and characters. There is a happy blending of plot, setting, characters and atmosphere; and the style is picturesque.

It would seem that the possibilities of the desert island situation had been exhausted long ago, but this is disproved most convincingly by *The Jungle's Accolade*. The story does not exemplify the idea of the survival of the fittest so much as it does Kipling's contention that the "female of the species is more deadly than the male." A girl, whom the author describes as a "hot-house plant, a hyancinthine creature," develops rapidly into a ruler of nine desperate men, rules them with an iron hand and in the end murders eight of them,—by proxy of course,— saving the ninth for herself. It is quite just that two of them should get their deserts, but the only crime committed by the original five is the desire to possess an attractive woman in a place where women are not to be had. The author's claim that love had to survive is not so true as that hate had to perish before love could be consummated; mere desire could have attained the same end. It is a good story despite the fact that the incidents are based more upon the ingenuity of the author in bringing them within the compass of an interesting situation than upon the personalities and the characteristics of the actors in the story itself.

For pure entertainment, *Big Brother* goes ahead of any of the stories for July. It deserves a high place because of its wholesome humor. The well planned plot ambles easily along, with an occasional surprise leaping out from its little ambush to add to the interest and to lead by devious ways to the big surprise at the end. The individuality of the characters is partly destroyed by the fact that they all speak in the same metaphoric vernacular, although one is a denizen of Chicago and the other two are inhabitants of the Canadian wilds. The major character, Hof Taylor, though not a thing of beauty, surely is a joy forever. Every sentence from his big, homely mouth brings a giggle, while his "Home, Sweet Home" is the most beguiling music ever. His common sense and resourcefulness demand respect. He is a literary "find."

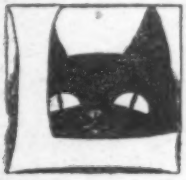
In theme, *The Unsullied Miranda* has an advantage over some of the other stories at

(*Continued on page* 45)

THE KNAVE OF SPADES

BY FREDERICK J. JACKSON

A gun-fighting son of the desert finds three peculiar epitaphs in a sage-brush cemetery and makes the acquaintance of a sheriff who cannot hold four of a kind without spraining his wrist.



A CANADA lay grilling in the brazen noonday heat of the southwestern desert country. The town was not quite on the desert itself, but the difference was very slight. The lagging breeze out of the west brought with it a hot, scorching breath from the miles of burning sands. It seemed to be trying to wither the little town that lay supine in the eddying heat waves, just over the hill from the cemetery.

A stranger rode up from the south. Horse and rider were powdered heavily with alkali dust, which had settled in perspiration-streaked cakes upon the face of the man and the moist body of the horse. The eyes of both man and animal peered out from behind white masks that were light gray in the spots damp with sweat.

The Los Cruzes River, fifteen miles behind, had been their last camp.

The rider made a detour and rode down into an arroyo, which he followed for about half a mile. Upon emerging from the canyon again, he was near the graveyard. La Canada was out of sight beyond the hill.

He dismounted, pulled the lines over the head of his horse and left him in the scant shade of a flowering yucca.

Scattered mounds among the sage-brush and cactus, with lizards sunning themselves on the heat-cracked rocks, such was the cemetery of La Canada. Some of the graves bore epitaphs on badly warped pieces of wood; others had none at all. Some had headstones, white rocks from the river bed. All of them with the exception of one or two, were utterly neglected.

The stranger paused before the spot where three fresh mounds lay alongside of each other. Next to them another grave had been dug. It was empty, unfilled. There was nothing awesome about it,—simply a hole in the sand, four feet deep. There was not even a shadow in the hole. The sun was shining directly down into it, but the man shivered despite the heat.

At the head of each of the three mounds a narrow stick of wood stuck upright in the sand. They were pieces knocked from the side of a packing case that had originally contained canned tomatoes. The top of each stick had been split with a knife, and into each slit was inserted a piece of pasteboard.

"Playing cards!" ejaculated the stranger, catching sight of them. "What th—?" He walked around to give a closer examination.

The three bits of cardboard were the knave of hearts, the knave of clubs and the knave of diamonds.

Bleached and split by the sun, they stared up at the stranger; grim, sinister epitaphs of the three men he had loved as brothers.

He choked suddenly, as the significance struck home; the veins in his temples swelled and throbbed.

"Curse him!" he muttered, "I'll—" His gaze absently wandered to the fourth, and unfilled grave. The light in his hard brown eyes turned even harder. Their irises grew darker and his face purpled slightly. He drew a deep breath, his hands clenched a couple of times spasmodically, then he turned and walked swiftly back to his horse. Mounting, he headed for the town.

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A little later his cayuse thrust its foam-flecked muzzle deep into the watering trough in front of Bill Jones's "Oasis," a saloon in La Canada.

Tethering his mount at the tooth-scarred hitching-rail, the stranger entered the Oasis. His coming had been unobserved; four inches of dust in the road had smothered all sound of hoofs.

Two men stood in front of the bar. Bill Jones was attending to their wants. In the far corner, a four-handed game of draw was in progress.

"Set 'em up for the outfit!" ordered the newcomer, untying the bandana at his neck. He removed his hat, wiped the sweatband dry, then mopped his dusty face.

"Hot, ain't it?" ventured the bartender, wondering at a man who would ride far in noonday heat.

"Might be worse," was the short reply.

Curious though he was, no more questions were asked by Bill Jones, for such is the etiquette of the region.

On his part, the stranger had many questions he wanted to ask, but forbore until later, when they could come up in the course of conversation and thus arouse no suspicion. As the best means to this end, he walked over to the poker table, when the players had resumed their seats after lining up at the bar.

"Open game?" he inquired.

"Surest thing you know. Set right!" was the invitation.

And so an hour passed, and another. The game began to lag. After several rounds of poor hands, conversation became a little more general. The stranger followed up a mention of the sheriff.

"Yes, siree," vouchsafed one of the players, known as Shorty, "we sure got an ace-high sheriff here. He's a lallapaloosa for fair!"

"So?"

"You bet!" was the enthusiastic response. "Why, only last month he jumped the Humbug Canyon gang after they'd held up the Limited. Caught three of them clean. Injuned right up on them with a single deputy and got the drop. Would have had the fourth hombre, too. Started after him single-handed, but his hoss sprung a knee among the rocks. He 'lows he winged this fourth bird, at that, before the son-of-a-gun flew out the other end of the canyon."

"How about the three he got?" The question was apparently casual.

"We gave 'em a fair trial, and strung 'em up last week. Bronson 'lowed they were three knaves for fair, so he—" Shorty related the incident of the cards—"and he's carryin' the fourth card, the jack of spades, with him. Swears he's gonna use it on this other hombre. Some of us 'low he's a bit previous because he's had the grave dug for him already. Had four of them dug at the same time to save trouble. Says he always cleans up his jobs. That's what we admires for an aspirin' galoot."

"Sure is!" agreed the stranger.

He cashed in his chips a little later, and went out to his horse. He mounted and rode down the street to a building which bore a sign reading:

SHERIFF'S OFFICE.

Outside, he dismounted. Spurs clanking with every step, he strode boldly in, the thumb of his right hand hooked carelessly inside his gun-belt.

A quiet-looking, clean-shaven man of medium height leaned back in a chair, with his feet on the table, as he read a newspaper. He looked up from the paper at the entrance of the stranger, his blue eyes taking in every detail at a glance. He saw the thumb hooked in the gun-belt, the fingers curling over the butt of the Colt, but his steady gaze never flickered. He looked calmly, confidently up into the ominous light of the brown eyes. For perhaps ten seconds their eyes clashed in a silent battle.

"What can I do for you?" inquired the owner of the blue eyes.

"You the sheriff,—Bronson?"

"I'm the sheriff. Bronson's my name."

The Colt came out of the holster with a jerk.

"Then I'll trouble you for your gun!"

"On the table." Bronson pointed to it. "What next?"

"Put on your hat and coat and come with me." He picked up the .45 and shoved it into the front of his shirt.

The sheriff appeared to take it calmly, but a little feeling of uneasiness began to creep over him as he looked again into the stranger's eyes. A menace, cold, calculating murder and desire for revenge were what he saw there. The man was as pregnant with death as a rattlesnake after sounding its warning.

Bronson suddenly remembered that both his deputies were gone. He was alone with this man whom he had allowed to get the drop on him. Therefore he waited his time and did the stranger's bidding. Many a man lay with his boots on in the patch of mounds over the hill, who would still be drawing one card to three of a kind every night had he not acted rashly in a like situation.

Bronson put on his hat and coat.

"What's the idea?" he inquired mildly. "Who are you?"

"I'm the Knave of Spades!" announced the stranger. His bloodshot eyes flickered slightly. "My pards lie up there," he jerked up his gun to indicate the direction, "and you, you black-hearted coyote, you made game of them. You put three dog-eared jacks on their graves to make men laugh. You dug a fourth grave, and, if I'm any kind of a prognosticator, it's goin' to be used *mighty pronto.*"

Bronson sat down again.

"You're going a trifle speedy, my friend. Back up! I make game of no dead men. I put up the three knaves as a warning that La Canada and all of Navarro County is a darned unhealthy location for such as you. It was a gentle hint to vamoose or get the same treatment. I knew those cards would cause talk; I wanted them to. They might have a tendency to quiet things down for a while, and then there's less work for me." The sheriff's tone was calm and he was apparently at ease.

His poise and confidence irritated the outlaw.

"You got that fourth jack on you?"

Bronson rather sheepishly produced the card from an upper vest pocket. The other man took it.

"Come along!" he ordered gruffly. "Hog-tie the election speech, and amble up the road. I'm goin' to ride alongside of you, just like we were old friends. I'll have you under my gun. One move or a signal to your friends, and I'll cut loose—six times. This job is all I have in life that interests me at present, and I'm goin' to finish it up to the queen's taste. I don't give a picturesque hoot in hades whether they get me afterwards or not. You winged me up in the canyon, or I'd have been around before this to get my pards out. I was too late for that, and when I found someone had insulted the memories of the best men that ever lived why I—"

"'Best men that ever lived,'" interjected Bronson. "You have funny ideas. Four quick-triggered dirty dogs are what you were. You left seven little children to starve when you shot up the engineer of the Limited,—seven innocent little kiddies crying their hearts out because their daddy doesn't come home to them."

"Seven kids! God! I never knew—aw, what's the matter with me? Outside! And head up the road. Vamoose!"

Bronson stepped out. Quickly he glanced up and 'own the street. Not a man was in sight. Several horses standing in front of saloons and a sleeping dog were the only signs of life.

He looked back over his shoulder. The Knave of Spades stood just inside the doorway. His arm was bent; the Colt in his hand was shoulder high, pointing at the ceiling; his thumb on the hammer, ready to pull down on him. The sheriff knew the posture. It always reminded him a rattler ready to strike,—the position of a snap shot, a skilled gunman.

"Hike up the road!" was the order.

The outlaw slipped the gun into his holster, stepped out into the road and swung onto his horse. A moment later he was riding slowly beside the sheriff, his thumb hooked carelessly over his gun-belt as before.

"Where you heading for?" inquired Bronson.

"The cemetery."

Bronson's wits were working, but there

seemed no way out. The dark, malevolent eyes were watching him like a cat. The slightest movement out of the way, and—Bronson did not like to think about it. He stumbled along blindly, chagrined beyond further speech, and hoping against hope.

Two hundred yards they had progressed down the road when there came a shrill, childish shout from behind.

"Daddy! O-o-o-h, daddy! Mother wants you to come right home to supper!"

Bronson stopped and turned. The outlaw pulled up his horse.

Dressed in a pair of blue rompers, a golden-haired little lad came running up to them, panting from his race.

"Daddy, mother sent me after you. And we're gonna have hot biscuits and honey for supper!" He took Bronson's hand and tried to pull him down the road.

"Family man, Sheriff?" The outlaw's tone was gruff.

"Yep! Three of them!" Bronson's eyes lit up momentarily, with a peculiar expression.

"Send the kid back!"

"Listen, Danny. You go right on back home to mother. I've got some—business with this gentleman."

Danny looked up at the "gentleman." His big blue eyes stared candidly up at him, curiously, fearlessly.

"I don't like that man!" he declared. Frankness was one of Danny's faults—or virtues. "Mother told me to stay right with you till you comed home, and I'm gonna do what she says!"

Bronson threw a semi-humorous, semi-helpless glance at the man on the horse.

"Can you beat that combination?" he grinned. "Danny takes his mother's orders on a thing, and mine don't count. He'd make a good soldier!"

"Keep travelin' up the hill," the horseman ordered. But there was a little uncertainty, lack of decision in his tone. Cruel, cold, ruthless; a dozen notches on the butt of his Colt; a man who had never been at a loss in any situation, he was baffled by this little child who gazed up at him with open eyes that reflected the blue of the heavens.

There was a smudge of dirt on Danny's slightly up-tilted nose and a sad rip in the knee of his rompers. The Knave of Spades noted these little human touches as the pair, father and son, trudged beside his horse. Danny's hand was clasped confidently on the sheriff's thumb.

Some vague emotion, long-forgotten, began to struggle within the outlaw. He battled against it, tried to still it, determined at all cost to avenge his mates.

They passed over the crest of the hill, and paused before the empty grave.

For a moment the outlaw sat in silence, looking down at Danny. What he saw was a little chunk of tan-cheeked, lovable, humanity, who was staring at him with a decided question in his eyes.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out the knave of spades. Tearing it, he doubled the halves and shredded them into finer pieces. He dropped the bits of torn cardboard into the hole. From his shirt he withdrew the sheriff's gun. Ejecting the cartridges, he dropped them with the gun after the remnants of the card.

"Get that shovel," he ordered Bronson, "and fill it in."

The sheriff removed his coat, gave it to Danny to hold, and set to work.

Silent, motionless, the Knave of Spades sat watching him. Occasionally, he took a long look at Danny, who was watching the proceedings with much interest.

His work finished, Bronson dropped the shovel, and turned.

The outlaw, an enigmatical, softened look upon his bitter face, drew a buckskin bag from his pocket. It was heavy with gold. He held it out to the sheriff.

"For the engineer's kiddies!" he said.

He turned his horse by the pressure of his knee. "Hand me up that shovel!" he ordered, and the sheriff obeyed.

The Knave of Spades touched the spurs lightly to the flanks of his mount and started to ride away, shovel in hand.

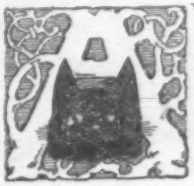
"Hey," called out Bronson, "what in the name of the Panamints are you going to do with that shovel?"

The outlaw turned in his saddle. "Maybe," he replied, "maybe I'm going to use it to bury my original intentions!"

SETTLED OUT OF COURT

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

In which a Mr. Harpy and several of his friends learn that you can lead the innocents to slaughter, but you cannot make them operate the guillotine.



EVERY sleek looking gentleman—possibly a very slick one—stood at the threshold of a room in the house of Underhill, in the locality called Tory Corner. He saw two people sitting on a sofa. One of these two was Miss Echo Underhill; the other was Mr. Peter Goodenough. They were engaged in a heart-rending pastime—making love, so deeply engaged that they were totally oblivious to the somewhat stealthy entrance of the gentleman in the long frock coat.

Then Peter saw him.

He released his strangle-hold upon Miss Echo Underhill, removed himself as far as possible from her immediate vicinity and shambled to his feet. Miss Underhill darted to a straight-backed chair, looking for all the world as though she had never been in the corner of a sofa and had not the slightest acquaintance with Mr. Peter Goodenough. The gentleman in the frock coat handed a card to Peter Goodenough. For the first time he spoke.

"I knocked at the door," he said, with a leer at Miss Echo and another leer at Peter, "and no one came. I found the door open and I walked in. My name," he added impressively, "is Emanuel Harpy, of the New York bar."

Echo, startled, looked at Peter. Peter turned pale. He fumbled with the card.

"Of New York," he gasped.

"I'm looking," said Mr. Emanuel Harpy, fastening a pair of hypnotic eyes upon the gentleman, "for Mr. Peter Goodenough, of Tory Corner."

"I'm Peter Goodenough," stammered that individual.

"I came up purposely to see you," went on Mr. Harpy. "I selected Sunday and I've made my quarters at the Mansion House. The communication I have for you is for your ears alone." He leaned forward and bowed somewhat elaborately to Peter. "A communication," he went on, in a confidential tone, "which involves the utmost advantage to yourself. You'd better come with me."

Peter gazed helplessly into those hypnotic eyes. He seized his hat and turned to Echo.

"I've got to go," he said.

Fifteen minutes later, Peter Goodenough found himself in Mr. Harpy's quarters at the Mansion House—room number 19—sitting on one side of a rickety table while Mr. Harpy sat upon the other side.

"Mr. Goodenough," said Mr. Harpy, still impressively, "have you ever heard of a man named Cradlebaugh?"

"The gambler?" queried Peter.

"The keeper," returned Mr. Harpy, "of the most notorious gambling house in the country."

"Yes," answered Peter; "he was a distant—a very distant relative of ours."

"Exactly," went on Mr. Harpy. "It is my duty to inform you that Mr. Cradlebaugh is dead."

Peter shrugged his shoulders. "Small loss to me. I didn't even know him, Mr. Harpy."

"Dying," went on Mr. Harpy, in even tones, "dying, Mr. Cradlebaugh left behind a will. It was a will made thirty years ago. In and by its terms Mr. Cradlebaugh left his entire estate to his only near relative, a woman of the name of Anderson. The woman of the name of Anderson is dead."

"I know she is," said Peter.

"She," proceeded Mr. Harpy, "though the only near relative of Mr. Cradlebaugh, was not the only relative. He had one other next of kin—yourself. So you have come into a fortune, sir, of a million dollars, more or less. You are a millionaire."

Peter sank back into his chair, dazed and almost fainting. Mr. Harpy ordered a brandy and soda for Peter, and Peter drank it down. Mr. Harpy took the further precaution to order a brandy and soda for himself. He drank his down. Peter came to.

"You're the executor of the Cradlebaugh will?" he asked.

Mr. Harpy shook his head. "The Widows and Orphans Trust Company, of New York, is the executor," he returned.

"You represent them?" asked Peter.

Again Mr. Harpy shook his head. "I do not represent them, Mr. Goodenough," he said. "The party that I represent is you. I am your lawyer, you understand."

"Oh," exclaimed Peter, a bit cautiously, "do I need to have a lawyer?"

The hypnotic eyes pierced him through and through. "Need to have a lawyer!" said Mr. Emanuel Harpy. "Did you ever hear of a millionaire who didn't have to have a lawyer?"

"I didn't know," faltered Peter.

"I've come, sir," said Mr. Harpy, "out here from New York, devoting my Sabbath to it, to inform you of these facts, to advise you that I am your lawyer, and to take you back to town with me."

"To New York," cried Peter.

"To New York," said Mr. Harpy. "How soon can you get ready, Mr. Goodenough?"

Peter surveyed himself in the mirror of room number 19. He was arrayed in his Sunday togs.

"I'm ready now," he said.

Ten minutes later he was standing with Mr. Harpy on the platform of the station. Two trains were about due,—one from New York and one to New York. The former pulled into the station first. From it there descended three metropolitan-looking individuals, each wearing a high silk hat and each garbed in a long frock coat. Mr. Harpy saw them first. His muscles stiffened.

"Excuse me just a moment, sir," he said to Peter Goodenough.

As the three high-hatted, frock-coated individuals looked about them in uncertainty, Mr. Harpy bore down upon them swiftly like some bird of prey. He reached them, called each by name, and flashed a rebuking glance upon them.

"You can go back to New York," he hissed. "He's my meat; I've got him. Do you understand?"

The three looked at each other helplessly. "Harpy's the early bird," they complained in defeat. "He gets the worm."

Mr. Harpy went back to Peter Goodenough. "Mr. Goodenough," he said in a low tone of voice, "I want you to cast your eye over those three men down there. I want you to mark them well. Never forget them. They've come here to fleece you—swindle you."

"Fleece me, swindle me," said Peter, bewildered; yet flattered to be the object of such unusual attention. "Who are they?"

"Their names," said Mr. Harpy,—"remember their names and remember their faces,—their names are Springfield, Solomon and Frankfurter—"

"What are they?" demanded Peter.

"P e t t i f o g g e r s—shysters from New York," said Mr. Harpy virtuously.

"What is a pettifogger—shyster?" queried Peter.

Mr. Harpy lifted his head high in the air. "Bum lawyers—very bum lawyers from New York," he said. "It is lucky for you, Mr. Goodenough, that you have secured a reputable man like me to represent you."

The next day Mr. Peter Goodenough, with Mr. Harpy at his side, confronted the officials of the Widows and Orphans Trust Company. They confirmed the information vouchsafed by Mr. Harpy. Cradlebaugh had left a will; he had left over nine hundred thousand dollars in gilt-edged securities. He had left no next of kin, no heirs-at-law, save Peter Goodenough, of Tory Corner.

"Of course," they told Peter, "we can't settle this estate, and therefore can't distribute it, for at least a year."

Peter glared at them as though they were

highway robbers,—pickpockets,—thugs.

"I thought," said Peter, "that I could get it now."

Mr. Harpy placed his hand on Peter's arm. "I can arrange to advance you all you need, Mr. Goodenough," he said.

The Trust Company's officials looked at Goodenough and looked at Harpy. They tried to flash a warning into Peter's eyes—a warning that was lost.

"Oh, as to that," they said, "once your relationship is established satisfactorily—and that won't take a week—we can let you have something on account."

"That's the ticket," said Peter.

"I can advance it just as well," said Mr. Harpy, wistfully.

"Not at all necessary," retorted the officials of the Trust Company.

And it wasn't necessary. Inside of a week Peter's heirship had been absolutely proved, and the Trust Company handed Peter a bank book containing a deposit of five thousand dollars on account.

"You're a young man," they said to Peter. "You're also a millionaire. Be careful of everything you do, very careful. Be careful particularly about signing papers."

"There," said Harpy to Peter, as they went back to Harpy's office, "didn't I tell you a millionaire needs a lawyer. They've told you so themselves. Of course you must be careful, and how fortunate you were to have selected me."

Peter was too busy looking at his bank book to note the word "selected." As a matter of fact, Mr. Harpy had been selected by nobody. Mr. Harpy was a gentleman with a method. He was one of a number of members of the bar who watch with zealous care the records of the Surrogate's office and ferret out heirs and next of kin.

"I sure do need a lawyer," assented Peter, "and while I'm about it, Mr. Harpy," he added, in a burst of generosity, "I may just as well pay you to date."

They had reached Mr. Harpy's office. Mr. Harpy sank into a chair and passed a box of cigars. Peter drew out his little check book.

"I ain't going to be a piker, Mr. Harpy," he said. "I want to pay you liberal, and I want to pay you up to date."

"There's no hurry at all," said Mr. Harpy. "Let it go until you get it all."

"I tell you," said Peter insistently, "I pay as I go. I pay on the dot. Don't say anything, Mr. Harpy; I'm going to be liberal. Let me fix the figure. I got money in the bank. Let me see," he mused, "you came out to Tory Corner and you've been up twice with me to the Trust Company and we had some talks together. Give me a pen, I'll pay you on the dot."

Mr. Harpy handed him a pen and watched him as he wrote. Peter carefully filled out the stub, then filled out the check and signed it, and tossed it over to Mr. Harpy. He picked it up, looked at it, turned pale, then red.

"Thirty dollars," he gasped.

"I knew it would knock you over," said Peter. "I allowed you five dollars for expenses to Tory Corner and back and twenty-five dollars for what you've done to date, and I don't want no receipt."

Mr. Harpy, with wonderful self-command, darted from his chair and shook Peter violently by the hand.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Goodenough," he said. "Ah, just excuse me a moment, if you please." He stepped into another room and confronted a flashy looking individual who was seated at a typewriter.

"Benny," said Mr. Harpy to this individual, as he shut the door behind him, "cast your eyes across this check. It's for services from Goodenough."

Benny Claypoole looked at the check and expectorated deftly and disgustedly.

"The piker!" he exclaimed.

"Sit down," said Harpy, pushing Benny back into the chair from which he had arisen. "Benny," he said, "we've sized him up. He's a piker for fair. We've got to make this fellow come to time. He's got to come across or we'll know the reason why, and you've got to help."

"Trust me," said Benny Claypoole.

"Come into my room, Benny," said Harpy, "and I'll introduce you to him. "Mr. Goodenough," said Harpy, a moment later, dragging Claypoole into his

private office, "this is Benny, my assistant. You're a stranger in New York, and I don't care whether you come from Chicago or from Tory Corner, you've got to know the ropes. Benny knows them and he'll show you." He passed the thirty dollar check to Benny Claypoole. "Benny," he said, with a generous wave of his hand, "get this check cashed and take Mr. Peter Goodenough to dinner and the theatre tonight."

Peter grabbed the check from Benny's hands and replaced it in the hands of Mr. Harpy.

"Not on your life," he said. "I stand treat. You can't pay any money while I'm around, you understand."

"I've got nothing more for you to do, Benny," said Harpy, magnanimously, "so you might as well go right now."

"Why didn't you let him give you that thirty dollars?" whispered Benny, as they went. "We could've had a bully time on thirty dollars."

"Thirty dollars!" said Peter. "If we don't spend three hundred I'm a piker."

"Three hundred!" gasped Benny. He darted into a fashionable downtown café. "Come in and have a drink," he said.

They had two, then two more and two more besides. Peter, thus fortified, swaggered with Benny Claypoole into a fashionable down-town clothing house. He plucked the floor walker confidently by the sleeve, and pointed to Benny Claypoole's magnificent raiment.

"I want you," he whispered, "to fit me out like that—just like that, even though it costs a thousand dollars."

In th twinkling of an eye they had him fitted out, and from that moment Peter became a genuine New Yorker.

"Now," said Peter, "Let's go to the Potato Patch."

Benny Claypoole held him at arms length and looked into his face. "What do you know about the Potato Patch?"

Peter laughed uproarously. "Ain't I heard about it?" he returned. "Don't I know what's what?"

"If that's what you're thinking of," said Benny Claypoole, "I'll go you one better. We'll try the Bashibazouks."

"What's that?" asked Peter.

"One better than the Potato Patch," retorted Benny.

They went to the Bashibazouks. The Bashibazouks was distinguished chiefly by its glitter of lights, its multitude of little, round tables and black cane chairs surrounding a clear space in the center left for dancing; and by one other feature—the multitude of aristocratic young ladies seated at intervals throughout the place.

"Most of them from Fifth Avenue," whispered Benny.

"They look it," said Peter, admiringly.

"You sit right down here," said Benny, "and I'll see if I can't give you a knock down to a few."

He wended his way in and out among the tables. He seemed to know them all. Peter's eyes glistened. He said to himself that the society women of Fifth Avenue had the society of women of Tory Corner beaten a mile. Very much to that young lady's detriment, he found himself comparing Echo Underhill with the ladies of the Bashibazouks. He felt a bit jealous of Benny Claypoole, who, he figured, could not be worth at the most more than twenty-five thousand dollars, as Benny bowed confidently at each feminine shrine. He could not hear what Benny said, but the ladies heard something like this:

"I've got a piker over here who's worth a million dollars," he whispered. "We've got to trim him. Come over and start in."

They flocked over without the slightest hesitation. They exhibited little or no embarassment. One of them, falling in love with Peter at first sight—at least that is what she said—chucked him quite coyly under the chin. Another laid her head tenderly upon his shoulder. Peter's eyes glowed. This, at any rate, was life.

"I'll buy some wine," he said to Benny Claypoole.

"Wine!" shrilled half a dozen feminine voices. "Why, you must be made of money."

"That's what I am," said Peter.

It was a week later. It was eleven o'clock in the morning. Peter, slumbering heavily in a fashionable uptown hotel, was awakened by the insistent ringing of the

the telephone. He answered it. The clerk was at the the other end. He advised Peter through the telephone that Miss Paliver would like to see him—Miss Pansy Paliver. Peter searched his memory. He could not place her. But he was game.

"Tell her to wait for ten minutes and then come up," he said.

He made a hasty toilet, but he still looked like the lost rose—the very last one—of summer, when Miss Paliver knocked upon the door. Peter opened it.

"Oh," said Peter, though he was still puzzled, "won't you come in?" He had a vague recollection that he had seen her at some time and some place before.

"Come in? I should think I would, old dear," said Miss Paliver. She came in and sank into the most comfortable chair in his room. She looked about her in alarm.

"Why," she demanded, "where are your glad rags? Aren't you going to wear a frock coat?"

"Frock coat," queried Peter, "why should I?"

Miss Paliver sat up straight. "You don't mean to say," she protested, "that you'd get married in a rig like that. Why, it's not even pressed. It looks as though you'd slept in it for a week."

"Get married in this rig," laughed Peter; "not much. When I get married I'll pay a thousand dollars for my wedding suit, if I pay a cent."

"Where are your glad rags?" demanded Miss Paliver. "You old dear, we haven't much time; you've hardly got time to change."

"Time for what?" demanded Peter.

"The hour we set was twelve," returned the lady. "We don't want to keep him waiting."

"Who waiting?" persisted Peter.

"The minister."

"What minister?"

Miss Paliver tweaked him affectionately by the nose. "Stupid," she returned, "the man who is going to marry us, my dear."

"Marry us," echoed Peter. "We're not going to be married."

Again Miss Paliver tweaked him gently by the nose. "Wake up, little one," she exclaimed, "the wedding bells are ringing."

Peter turned pale. "Honest to goodness," he said, "I don't know what you're talking about. Do you mean that I am going to marry you?"

"As though it wasn't all arranged," laughed Miss Paliver.

"But," protested Peter, "I'm in earnest and you're only making fun of me. Nothing was arranged. I never said I'd marry you."

She pushed him into a chair and stood over him. "Come to your senses," she exclaimed, in unusual business-like tones. "Stop trying to kid the life out of me. In half an hour we're to be married. You arranged it, I arranged it, everybody arranged it."

"Who's everybody?" asked Peter.

"My—er—family," said Miss Paliver.

"Honest to goodness," repeated Peter, "I don't know anything about it. Tell me."

"Tell you!" said Miss Paliver. "Don't you remember buying me this ring? Don't you remember buying flowers, candy? Don't you remember Sunday afternoon, Monday evening, Tuesday evening?"

Peter was startled. "By George," he said, "I don't. I remember your face, that's all. I met you somewhere."

"Somewhere," she returned. "Why, my dear, don't you remember my—er—family objecting to my marrying—to your wanting to run away with me—to my insisting upon having a respectable wedding?"

"I remember nothing," said Peter blankly.

She seized him by the arm and jerked him from the chair.

"Come," she said, "the minister is waiting."

Peter released himself gently but firmly. "I'm not going to marry you," he said; "at least, not now. Why, I don't know you; I don't know anything about you—"

There was a tap upon the door.

"Come in," said Peter with relief.

Mr. Benny Claypoole entered. He pointed an accusing finger at Peter.

"How in thunder," he said, "did you get away from me? I've been looking for you for three days. I told you to stick to me or you'd get into trouble."

"I'm in trouble," said Peter drily. "This woman wants to marry me."

Unseen by Peter, a flash of understanding passed between Miss Paliver and Mr. Claypoole.

"Wants to marry you," she said. "I don't know your friend, though you might introduce me."

"He's my lawyer—or one of my lawyers —Mr. Claypoole," said Peter.

"Lawyer!" snapped Miss Paliver indignantly. "So this is the kind of a man you are. I ask you once for all, even in the presence of your lawyer, do you intend to marry me or do you not?"

"I do not," said Peter Goodenough.

"Very well,' said Miss Paliver, "I guess there are other lawyers in New York besides Mr. Claypoole. I have a lawyer myself. You'll hear from him this afternoon."

Peter did hear from him that afternoon. At two o'clock he was served with a summons and complaint in the breach of promise suit of Paliver against Goodenough. He read the paper through. It was signed by a lawyer by the name of Springfield. Peter racked his brain. He had heard that name before. He took the summons and complaint down to his counsel, Mr. Harpy. Mr. Harpy read it.

"Goodenough," he said, "you ought to be spanked. A man with a million has no business to do anything without a lawyer. I told you to stick to Benny Claypoole. If you had stuck to him without running away—"

"I thought all the time *he* ran away," said Peter.

"You thought a good many things," responded his counsel, "and you did a good many things, and this is one of them—and look at the name that's on the back of these papers—Springfield."

"I knew I'd heard it before," said Peter.

"Springfield," repeated Harpy, contemptuously. "This is Springfield's doings. Springfield is one of the three pettifoggers that you saw at Tory Corner. He's getting back at you."

"Getting back at me! What did I ever do to him?" queried Peter.

"You did this to him," replied Harpy: "You employed me, a reputable lawyer instead of employing him, a shyster."

"We'll defend the suit," said Peter. "We'll fight him to the finish."

"This suit," said Mr. Harpy, "is for fifty thousand dollars' damages for breach of promise. What are the facts—did you promise?"

"I don't know," faltered Peter.

"That's what you get," sighed Harpy, "for running away from Benny Claypoole and letting some fool woman take you in. You come down to-morrow morning and we'll see what we can do."

When Peter had gone, Mr. Emanuel Harpy picked up his hat, descended to the street, darted around the corner, and within a very few minutes stood in the presence of the plaintiff's attorney, Mr. Springfield.

"Springfield," he said, "I've done all the work in this case and I've made all the arrangements. I've used your name—that is practically all. I'm going to settle this case for ten thousand dollars. How much do you want?"

"I ought to get a thousand," said Springfield.

"Not on your life," said Harpy. "You get five hundred and we'll give the woman five hundred. I'll take the rest. I'll serve you with an answer and we'll settle before suit."

"All right," said Springfield, "anything you say."

Harpy filed an answer, but advised a settlement, and Peter Goodenough, a sadder, wiser man, parted in due course with ten thousand dollars. Of the nine thousand which he netted, Mr. Harpy magnanimously handed Benny Claypoole a crisp one thousand dollar bill.

"Good work, Benny," said Harpy; "let it go on. This is the thin edge of the wedge. This guy has got a million dollars, understand."

Benny Claypoole got busy and Peter kept him busy. Notwithstanding Mr. Claypoole's careful guidance, which consisted chiefly in seeing that Peter got more than enough drink, Peter found himself constantly in difficulty—always of his own making. He woke up in police stations

in the morning; he handed Mr. Claypoole large sums of money to buy off the newspaper reporters and to fix the officers of the court and the Judge upon the bench. He found himself harassed by slander suits; suits for assault and battery; suits by indignant alleged husbands for the alienation of affections of alleged wives.

In two of these suits one Frankfurter, another shyster, appeared as attorney for plaintiff and thus he got back at Peter Goodenough, who had thrown him over so cavalierly for Mr. Emanuel Harpy.

But with it all Peter kept generally within bounds. He never forgot his experience with Miss Pansy Paliver, and he did not propose to anybody else. He clung closely to Mr. Benny Claypoole, so closely that that gentleman could not shake him off. He did not sign his name to any papers, and the capers that he cut were merely capers. He was finding that experience was a teacher after all.

"Confound it," said Harpy to Claypoole one day, "this duck's got a million and we haven't made twenty thousand out of him, and here's a year gone by."

"He'll get all his money in a month or more," said Claypoole, gloomily.

"They'll pay it to him direct," added Harpy. "They won't let us get our fingers on that money, don't you fret."

Emanuel Harpy rose and paced the floor. As he did so a sudden idea smote him with unusual violence.

"By George, Benny," he exclaimed, "I've got it! The real stuff—a little girl."

"What little girl?" asked Benny Claypoole.

"The little girl that I saw him hugging on the sofa back in Tory Corner. Listen, he hasn't been back there since; he's stuck on New York women; he hasn't thought of Tory Corner. He came down with me that Sunday afternoon, and ever since he's gone the pace and he left that little girl behind him. By George, Benny, we'll get that little girl."

"What's the next train for Tory Corner?" queried Benny.

They got the little girl, but they didn't go personally to Tory Corner. A pettifogger, a shyster, by the name of Solomon, performed that duty for them. He went to Tory Corner.

The situation was quite as Mr. Emanuel Harpy had described it. Miss Echo Underhill was forsaken and forlorn.

Mr. Solomon took Miss Echo Underhill and her family quite by storm, forced matters upon them, outlined their policy to them, denounced Peter, described Peter's shortcomings, and came away with a neat little paper writing in his pocket. It was an authority signed by Miss Echo Underhill, directing the bringing of a suit for breach of promise, and provided for a contingent fee to Mr. Solomon of one-half the recovery.

Solomon came back to Harpy. Harpy glanced over the contract—gloated over it—locked it in the safe.

"By George, Solomon," he said, "there's five thousand dollars in this thing for you. You bring suit to-morrow for half a million dollars against this piker Goodenough, and, by George, we'll settle for a quarter of a million, see if we don't. The girl gets one-half—or less, you get five thousand, Benny here gets five and I get the balance. Is it a go?"

It was a go and suit was brought. Peter with the beads standing out on his forehead came down posthaste to Harpy. Harpy cross-examined him upon the facts.

"This is serious, Goodenough," he said, "blamed serious. This girl means business."

"Why," said Peter, "you can settle with her for five thousand dollars."

Harpy shook his head. "This isn't a case for settlement, Goodenough," he said. "We've got to scare these people out. We'll defend this suit to the bitter end. The way to settle a suit of this kind is to fight it to the death."

They fought it to the death, and New York sat up and took notice. A five hundred thousand dollar breach of promise suit always interests the newspapers. Finally it was reached for trial.

"Now, Solomon," said Harpy, "I want you to do this: I want you to take the finest modiste in New York up to Tory Corner. I want you to have her gown that girl in just the way a village beauty should be gowned. I don't want a sug-

gestion of New York about it. Her hat wants to be a fetching hat, but it's got to be a Tory Corner hat, and the same way with her whole get up. We're going to play this game for all it's worth."

"You're not really going to fight, are you?" queried Solomon. "If you do, I'll have to get good counsel."

"I don't know what I'll do," said Harpy. "I think I can get this duck to settle for a quarter of a million; it's worth that to the girl. It's a clean, white case, Solomon, and how the dickens my client is going to get out of it I fail to see. I saw this girl. This girl is going to get the jury and get them good and hard. I don't know; we may try it after all. You go to Tory Corner, fix her up and bring her down, then we'll see."

Solomon went to Tory Corner, and fixed Echo Underhill up and brought her down. Unknown to her, Emanuel Harpy looked her over and his hopes beat high. He called in Claypoole.

"Benny," he said, "I think we'll fight this case until just before it goes to the jury. By that time Peter Goodenough can see for himself the effect this girl is going to make. At last I've got this piker where I want him. I've got a hundred thousand dollars in my hand; I can feel it there, Benny."

Under Harpy's careful direction neither Echo Underhill nor Peter Goodenough appeared in the court room until the case was actually reached for trial.

It was a dramatic moment when Echo tripped to one end of the counsel table and Peter strode to the other end. They stood there looking wonderingly at each other. The spectators gasped. It was a spectacle. On the one end was Peter Goodenough, the young, fashionable, flashy, sportive millionaire, clad immaculately from top to toe in the very best that money could buy, the highest product of metropolitan civilization—a man about town.

The spectators saw all this in Peter Goodenough, and somebody else saw it, too. Echo Underhill was the somebody. Her recollection of Peter was that of a round-faced, muddy-faced boy, who usually was in desperate need of a close shave.

But if the spectators looked at Goodenough with interest, they gazed long and earnestly at Echo Underhill with a far deeper interest. They had read of village maidens, but they had rarely seen one. They little knew that all her outward simplicity had been carefully contrived in the shop of a fashionable Fifth Avenue dressmaker; they little knew that her hat, which seemed interwoven with the straws and flowers of the field, was a creation costing forty dollars at the least. Even Echo did not know that herself.

But however much this crowd of New York spectators stared at her in wide-eyed interest, their interest could not equal that of another person present—Mr. Peter Goodenough. For more than a whole year he had seen paint and powder and artificial hair; strange perfumes had assailed his nostrils. He had wearied of gowns indiscreet, bizarre. He loved New York. He was sick of New York women.

For one instant he stood with his eyes riveted upon the face of Echo Underhill. Then, as though impelled by common impulse, the little village maiden left her end of the table and he left his. They forgot the mass of eager, hungry-eyed spectators behind the rail.

"Echo," said Peter Goodenough, holding out his hand.

"Peter," she responded, squeezing his.

In another moment it was all over. They had fallen instinctively into each other's arms.

The spectators' hearts stood still while Peter affectionately bent down to kiss her —while she lifted up her lips to him.

"Your honor," exclaimed Mr. Solomon, the shyster, "I represent the plaintiff. I move this case of Underhill against Goodenough. I am ready to proceed."

The Judge looked at Mr. Solomon; he looked at Mr. Harpy; he looked at the spectators behind the rail; and then he looked at the two figures clasped in each other's embrace, who occupied the center of the stage. The court smiled and looked at Mr. Solomon again.

"Oh, no, Mr. Solomon," the Judge said, "you are not ready to proceed. This case has been settled out of court."

KID CARTER AND REFORM

BY HOWARD PHILIP RHOADES

"Lest auld acquaintance be forgot—" That is the Old Home Week spirit the Kid was nursing when he ran into the epidemic of reform which had ravaged his home town and marked it for life.

ID CARTER looked upon his home town with an emotion different from any that had ever stirred him. For the first time in ten years he was home; and although he had come with all speed, once he had decided to come, he now stood on the edge of the place curiously hesitant. Had there, after all, not been sweeping changes? Would he find here the haven he wished?

He had just left his private car, a fifty-ton hopper model, and, in so doing, stung his feet upon the hard roadbed. While the rest of the freight whizzed by, he looked away toward the heart of the city. He had not seen the place for such a long while!

He sauntered ahead to a suburban highway, crossing the railroad, and gazed for a moment at its broad, smooth expanse, in wonder.

"Not much like the night we pulled that first auto bandit stunt," he mused. It was a pet memory. "That was before them ink spreaders gave it a handle. U-m-m—I can feel that little old Brush bounce yet, on that lousy road. Banditing in a Brush! But she had a real man at the wheel—Swipes Gorman—a regular fellow!"

There was longing in his eyes, a longing which had grown more painful as he approached home. A double motive had brought him back. But *en route* it had been supplanted by a second double impulse which now far overshadowed the first.

Originally he had left the East because certain reforms had passed the "newspaper talk" stage, and had taken tangible shape. This worried Kid vaguely. But a more acute worry dealt with the tapping upon the head of a gentleman of means in his palatial home, whence Carter had fled in the same general direction as some poorly aimed bullets.

Kid did not yearn for the sight of certain heavy-handed acquaintances who, he felt, might now be specially desirous of meeting him. Back home, he believed, in the old Boone Street, where he used to be part of the gang, there would be neither reform nor surveillance.

At times, Kid Carter had longed to go back to the old home town, to smile at old friends, and make faces at ancient enemies, but not until he had rolled into the last hundred miles between him and his goal, did this desire mature with a poignancy which made him tingle. He had no kin, at least none he cared to look up. But he never realized until the cars came with frequent stops and jerks, into the outer yards, just how much he wanted to see Swipes Gorman and Lizzie Turner. He trembled, as he clung to the car, simply with the thought of this pair. He shook his head, wondering how he had remained away so long. Swipes, he thought sadly, had probably left town. But the girl—

Kid had ridden the bumpers in order to get into town with a little money. Ten minutes' walk brought him to a car line, and he was whirled through the spring breeze by trolly. The street was new to him, and flanked with attractive little bungalows, each with its green grass plot and neatly trimmed hedge. Although city planning meant nothing to Kid Carter, he could not help being struck by the change. There was a vigorous, cleaner look about the place. Well, that meant money, and a chance to ply his trade.

He sought a downtown corner formerly haunted by men of his own stamp. It was devoid of loafers. A great crowd, busy, clean-cut, happy, passed on its way. Kid puzzled over the shop on the corner. The ornate signs of old were missing, and nobody was reeling out of a fancy glass front door. The place looked luxurious, but sedate, like the home of aristocracy. Something told him, however, that it must be what he sought, and he entered.

There was a subdued rosy light in the place. The floor was artistic tile and the woodwork polished mahogany. The only thing missing was the crowd. A young man smiled across at him with such civility that Kid almost thought he was buying a house and lot instead of a drink.

"Whiskey!" ordered Kid.

"Whiskey!" exclaimed the bartender. "Oh—you're a stranger. I guess you can still get it in Chicago. But here—nothing but beer and wine. Maybe we won't have that long. Next month they vote on the wet and dry."

"Gimme some suds, then."

"My last jitney," he lied, as he finished. "Gimme a chew, will you?"

The bartender tossed across the bar a stick of chewing gum.

Kid started, as from something that might bite him. Then he looked pityingly at the other. "Gum—hell!" he sputtered. "I want tobacco!"

The bartender's look changed. "Oh, I didn't know," he said. "You see, our biggest factories here don't pay their best salaries to men who chew—the efficiency thing, you know—and it's hurt our sale of chewing. Wait, I've got an open pack here in the drawer, that I take a chew of sometimes. I keep it there," he smiled, "so the boss won't see."

Kid walked out, his head whirling. He wasn't sure he was awake. His ruminations, meanwhile, produced a mouthful of nicotinic saliva, and to show his scorn, he shot it at the pavement. It splattered near the edge of the sidewalk.

A strong arm grabbed him. "What'd you mean, spitting on the sidewalk?" A huge blue-coater had hold of Kid.

"I—I was aiming at the gutter."

"Well, hold your mouth straighter," was the stern admonition. "That spreads disease. Stranger in town, ain't you?"

"Came here to work." Kid didn't know what made him say it. For years he never had admitted, even to the law—and this marks the nervy criminal—that he had ever had any connection with work. Some strange influence in the busy air had put the words into his mouth, and he stepped away briskly as the policeman loosened his grip.

Into old Boone Street he walked, with growing wonder. Paddy Corrigan's famous "White Front," Maude Reardon's "Tonky Garden," the sullen tenements, the filthy little shops, the littered sidewalks, had all vanished. In their places, towering from five to ten stories, loomed broad wholesale houses and factories,—clean, respectable, modern.

Like Rip Van Winkle, Kid passed through the street. At he end, under the sign, "This building to be razed to make way for the new home of the Large Specialty Company," he found the dingy little grocery of Daddy Potts; but Daddy wasn't there. To a new face he said, "Say, I been gone, and this old pave is changed. Where does the gang that used to hang out here, live?"

"Well," said the storekeper, "most of 'em lives out in what they call the model city. They all got gardens and chicken yards and that, out there. It's a lot better place for working people."

Kid had intended to walk in on Mother Turner, and laughing at her surprise, ask for Lizzie. He turned, when half out of the store, nd asked, "Say, where does old lady Turner live, that used to be across the street?"

"Turner—Turner?" pondered the man. "Oh—I guess she don't live anywhere unlessen there is life like the preacher says. She croaked over there, two years ago, the week before they started to tear the old place out."

"Her gal—Lizzy?" Kid asked huskily.

"She did have a gal; I never seen her since she left. That's long ago—long enough for her to be married."

Kid bolted without thanks. Two blocks

away, in a drug store, he pawed a city directory. Turner—Turner—no Lizzy——no Lizzy. He was sick;—she was married. Well, what could he expect after these years? Of course her name wasn't Turner. Some man in that big book was her husband—damn him! His fingers drifted idly. Then "Elizabeth Turner, stenographer, the Stanton Company."

"Say," he observed, when the clerk wasn't busy, "isn't Elizabeth a kind of nickname for Lizzy?"

"Yeh—in some cases," was the cautious reply.

"Hope it is in this one," prayed Kid, and he was off.

Half an hour later he was at the big factory of the Stanton Company, inquiring for the girl he sought.

"Miss Lizzy—Elizabeth, maybe it is—Turner."

A messenger summoned a slender girl, whose cheeks flushed prettily beneath her black hair. Her hazel eyes were bright, and the delicate mouth a bit gaping, in half recognition, when Kid burst out, "Hello, Lizzy, how is you?"

A couple of girls, working nearby, snickered; but Kid did not catch the slightly pained look. He saw only the astonishment and doubt in the girl's face, and cried, "It's Kid Carter, you used to play with down on Boone Street. I just got back. Say, things have changed."

"Yes," she said, a curious catch in her voice, "things have changed."

"Lizzy, you don't look glad to see me," he said, disappointed.

"Of course I am—Harry."

"Call me Kid. That's my name. You gave it to me yourself that day I beat up Dutch Krause for hitting you with the barrel stave. Remember? You had a picture of Kid McCoy, and you said I'd grow up to be as big a man as him. Then the others called me Kid, and I'm still Kid."

"Where have you been?" she asked, looking at him in a way which made him uneasy.

"Seeing the country," he said evasively.

"Why did you come home?"

"I wanted to see the old town—and you," came straight from his heart.

"Did you really want to see me?" she asked, in a low voice.

"You bet. And Swipes," breathlessly, "is he still here?"

"Yes; I see him sometimes."

"Great! Say, it's near quitting time. Can I walk home with you? Meet you out in front?"

"Come into the rest room and wait," she invited. It was an attractive place, with easy chairs, a piano, and tables of books and magazines. "I'll be ready in forty-five minutes," she said.

Kid ranged about the room, in which he was alone, guardedly. He never had been in such a nicely furnished place, save late at night, and on dangerous business. He touched a few things, as if measuring intuitively to see if they would fit into his pockets. With him theft was the art upon which he had directed his brains. Passing over the books and magazines, he selected a colored newspaper comic, and settled awkwardly into a big chair.

Soon a distant whistle sounded, and there were hurried steps in the halls. Thousands of employes were leaving. One stopped before the rest-room door. She was radiant in her neat little hat and close-fitting coat. Those deep eyes which recalled to Kid the sad-faced child of the streets, ten years ago, had a sparkle in them and the cheeks had a natural pink which Boone Street, of old, had denied.

"I always walk," she said. "It isn't far, and it's good for you. Tell me about yourself, now, Kid," she smiled at him.

"They ain't much to tell," he said, feeling that this new Lizzie wouldn't care to hear of the things he held dear. With this thought he considered the contrast in her and said, with some regret, "I think you ought to tell me about yourself."

"Perhaps, Kid. Things have gone better. Living a different and better life is a cinch, when you have a chance. I hope you're going to settle down and work here."

"I hope you're going to let me buy you a drink," he evaded. "I've been thinking of that ever since I started back. I was scared I wouldn't find you. Now that I have, let me blow you to a little dinner

and a drink. I got a case note, or two."

"No, Kid, thanks, I must go right home tonight. This is gym night, and I mustn't miss it."

"Jim who?" blurted Kid, his fists clenching.

"Gymnasium," she laughed. "That's a poor joke, Kid. But I do want to accept your invitation. I'll go tomorrow night. Here's where I live. Will you call for me tomorrow night, at six-thirty?"

They were in front of a great building, over the door of which stood forth in white letters: "Y. W. C. A."

"What does that stand for, Lizzy?" asked Kid.

"Young Woman's Christian Association," she replied.

"I thought so," he sneered. "I know them things."

"So do I," she said with meaning. "They made me out of a kid who might have been—God knows what. They gave me a chance."

He stood in the dropping twilight, a hard look in his face. She saw that some condemnation was upon his lips. Into her heart came the mightiest wish to help this man, for whose return she had so often longed. Drawing close to him, she rested her little fingers upon his arm. "Kid," she said softly, "you don't understand, but you shall. I've a little time. We'll get that drink, anyway."

Feeling that he had won a point, Kid followed her lead across the street. She started into a store upon the front of which was displayed the word, "Soda," in letters that appeared to be hung with icicles.

A feeling akin to horror seized Kid. Grabbing the girl, who was a step in advance, he gasped in her ear, "Where you going?"

"They are fine, here," she explained. "The ice cream is grand."

"Ice cream—soda!" he choked. Did you think I would buy such a damned mess of soap suds? What kind of a girl are you? I've heard of such. But I didn't think Lizzie Turner—"

"Kid—" she began.

"Don't 'Kid' me," he cried savagely. "It ain't the soda, though that's bad enough. It's you—a fine lady—high-brow stuff—living in one of them God-help-us joints. Where's your pink tea car, and your jewels, you cheap sport!"

"Kid, please—" she protested.

"Kid, hell!" he burst out. "I don't ever want to see you again. You didn't name me 'Kid' and I didn't give you the first kiss you ever had. Understand, I'm off of you—for life!"

"Kid, I was so glad you came back," she wept. "But I couldn't turn against them. They made me all I am."

"Go tell them they made a nice job of it," he taunted. "I'm going out to make a crack. And the gal who gets a divy of the dough won't be you—you poor Sunday-school simp!"

She was running away to escape listeners. Kid gave a hiss of derision and turned away. He had been denied money, food, home and liberty; but, in his world, women had always been available. He felt between tears and curses to be denied this one who had fired his brain in such a different way. Because she was not easy to get, his lips had lied, while his heart knew, for the first time, how deeply he felt.

In saloons, Kid drank light wines like water, always cursing the lack of the fiery red drink which was ruled out. Later he slipped into the street. It was too late for hardware stores to be open, but he found a little second-hand tool store, so poor and antiquated, that it had to remain open fifteen hours a day to show a profit.

He purchased a flashlight and a small crowbar, both of which, he explained, were needed at the garage where he worked. Worked! His lip curled as he slipped away, realizing that for the second time in a few hours he had professed this unheard-of thing.

He concealed his purchases in his pockets, and started for more drinks. "Do you know Swipes Gorman," he bibulously asked a burly worker, in the third drinking place. "I want to find him. His daddy was the best peterman that ever knocked off a knob. When I was so high, I saw his old lady knock down a copper

and pour boiling water on him. Swipes is a man," he bleared at his auditor, "a regular feller!"

But he did not find Swipes Gorman. In fact, he did not find anybody who was companionable. There were none of the fellows of old to shake hands unsteadily with the stranger and swear to drink till closing time. He made the rounds of the few old-time places left, and everywhere felt a different atmosphere, one of abstemiousness and good-fellowship, rather than gorging and abandon. The places were filled with workers relaxing, rather than with "drunks" at their life's occupation.

Kid had to squander money for food. The free lunch counter of yester-year was gone. His eyes bulged when he heard there was a state law against it. With pockets almost empty, he went out into the night. The "crack" of which he had boasted would have to be made; but somehow the atmosphere did not encourage it. Even in the nearest approach to an old-time dive, he had not seen one man that he felt like approaching and engaging as lookout.

"I can cut it alone, I guess, if this town has got so good," he assured himself. After an hour of motion pictures, passed by the state censors, he spent his last quarter on additional drinks and walked toward the residential district.

Our better burglers do not rush up to the first prospect they find and break in. They believe in watchful waiting. After he had walked for some time, Kid Carter wished that he had until the next night to plan his job. He observed to himself that place after place didn't look good. Then, after long prowling he cursed, "Why ain't they a saloon on that corner? This place is getting my goat!"

As a stand against an insidious something, which he was growing to fear, Kid plowed through an alley, and, after circling a dark house, rang the front door bell. Kid knew that this house was temporarily uninhabitated. Repeated rings brought no response. He went around the block once more, and came in again from the alley. He slunk through the rear gate to a window.

The crowbar wasn't a regular jimmy, but it did the work. Soon he was inside, finding his way by a round patch of light, flickering on the floor ahead of him. Through the dining-room into a hall, he went, then to a stairway. He was careful to open another window near the front, as a means of escape, if needed, and ascended the stairs.

H was more confident now. He would take plenty of time and make a good cleaning. Bedrooms are the places for valuables, and he chuckled as his fingers closed upon a watch, a necklace, a fat pocketbook. He continued his search, passing from room to room, reaping a rich reward. "I bet there hasn't been a job pulled in this chautauqua for a year, the way they leave things around," he murmured.

He spent about twenty minutes among the rooms. Just as he was making sure he had the last of the jewels, there was a noise downstairs. Kid's heart double-quicked. Even a burglar thrills when he feels he is discovered. Instantly he was at the top of the stairs listening. A light was snapped on below. Steps sounded.

If he went into one of the bedrooms to raise a window it would mean noise, and a drop to the ground. He peered down the stairs. In the hall was an elderly man with side whiskers. Kid had such a contempt for the prowess of age, and such a knowledge of how a burglar scares the average citizen, that he determined to bolt downstairs and out past the man.

For the first time his revolver, a fixture in his pocket, leaped forth. Down the steps he flew, the gun pointed ahead.

"Beat it, or I'll shoot," he growled.

The elderly man stood squarely before the door.

"Get out!" snarled Kid, "or—"

Too late he heard a step behind. His gun arm was paralyzed. Powerful hands closed upon him. He was hugged backward and nearly crushed.

"Easy Tom," he heard the old gentleman say. "Don't hurt him."

Kid found himself in a chair. He was already disarmed, and soon he was shorn of his spoils by a big, muscular man, who

went vigorously from pocket to pocket.

"Get that police 'phone number, Father," ordered the younger man.

"Not just yet, Tom. I want to talk with this fellow. Bring him into the library."

"But Father—"

"Do as I say, Tom."

In the luxuriously furnished room, Kid Carter talked. A kind assurance from the older man drew forth his story. Never afraid to talk about the course he had taken, Kid warmed under this influence to brag of his exploits and admit his handicaps. When he came to the present, the elder man nodded his head understandingly.

"What else could be expected?" he asked, with a voice of feeling.

Then to Kid he said: "I am Professor Upton Lyfte. I teach sociology and economics. I head the bureau of psychological research, am a member of the committee on civic betterment, and correspondent of the national homelife survey. Present this card at the employment departments of any of the firms named. I refuse to turn you over to the police, because we still have a few judges who imprison men for things they cannot help. Here is ten dollars to tide you over, until you get work."

Kid Carter walked weakly away. Only his revolver was gone. He had been captured in the commission of a felony and had been rewarded for it by the victim. He was too dazed to swear, too crushed to protest. He was even too lifeless to throw away the card given him. Under an electric light he stared at it, and muttered: "Swipes Gorman ain't in this town. He wouldn't live in such a dump!"

His spirit returned as he walked, and a violent loathing of this inexplicable regime smote upon him. His tongue revived and he cursed and protested himself back to a region where there were saloons. Driven to the bursting point by his succession of experiences, Kid's bitterness found a whimsical outlet.

Five minutes to midnight found him in a handsome saloon, fitted with many chairs and tables, but no bar. It was virtually deserted. He secured a connection with the police station, and asked for the captain.

"I'm at"— to the bartender—"what's the name of this place—Morissey's? Say, Cap, I'm out at Morissey's saloon—"

His arm was jerked by a waiter. "Don't call it a saloon, friend," said the latter. "The boss don't allow that. It's Deitcher Wirtschaft."

"Go get me a cup of custard, you," cried Kid at the waiter. Then to the world at large, desperately, "What's the use?" Into the transmitter again: "Say, Cap, there's a dame at the Old Lady's Home, with a sick stumick. She wants a cop out there to hold her head. I know a couple of yeggs that wants to get up a game of Farmer in the Dell, can you send over a squad? All right, don't disturb their knitting. Goodnight—goodnight!" He fled out the side door.

No need to trace the emotional fireworks which Kid Carter wasted on the dim, empty streets. He made no further attempt at a crack. He had ten dollars. Besides, he was afraid. The place was on his nerves. Something more powerful than all the coppers in Christendom menaced him.

But during the next few hours as he wandered from one night lunch to another, pausing anywhere he found a place to loaf, his indignation wore off. It was replaced by another feeling. Kid Carter was mourning over his home town. Sorrowfully, over a cup of coffee, in the last place he visited, he reviewed his day, contrasting this city with the one he left ten years ago.

When he thought of the afternoon and early evening, he sneered to himself: "I should worry. I don't want her. It's easy to see why Swipes beat it. Me for a town where there's at least a chance to get jammed!"

The paleness which chases away night's blue vault was coming when Kid Carter hit the pavement again, addressing himself to the railroad yards. He was out near the edge of the city when the first street car overtook him. A man jumped from it and hurried toward the sidewalk. He bumped into Kid Carter, but Kid's

growl and ready fists were met by a pair of eyes he knew.

"Swipes!" he cried, with joy.

The other man looked twice. Then he said, "Kid—Kid Carter! Where you been? When did you get back?"

"Yesterday. But I didn't never expect to find you. It's changed."

"Yes. It has changed. Struck anything?"

"Damn little," said Kid.

"Well, come with me tonight, will you?"

"Sure," said Kid. "In a hurry?"

"Just a little."

"Where will I meet you?" asked Kid.

"Where we used to. On the north side of the monument—remember?—down at the square. Six sharp."

"I'll be there," said Kid. "You go ahead," he said knowingly. "I don't want to keep no fellow from his gal."

Kid turned back from the railroad, his heart full. Here he had nearly left town without seeing the one regular fellow in the place, his boyhood pal. If Swipes Gorman was still here the town must be right. As it was growing quite light Kid went to sleep at a cheap hotel. Even his bed here was different. It was white and spic and span. Kid felt almost lonesome, for he was the only living thing in the bed.

Kid was up soon after midday, nervous and expectant. How would he ever spend the time until six o'clock? Picture shows, the downtown parks, the saloons were dull. He was going out with Swipe Gorman that night!

Swipes was on time, and Kid said, as they shook hands, "You're looking prosperous."

"I was tired and dirty, after a night of it," explained Swipes. "How is it with you?"

"Not so good," said Kid. "But the two of us ought—"

"Here's our car," said Swipes. They were separated in the jam, but, after they had gone some distance, Swipes waved to Kid, and they got off. Swipes glanced at his watch. "Come on," he said; "we've got to hurry."

They reached an immense building, surrounded by a wall, and entered through a small gate. Across a big yard many men were moving. Swipes pushed on but Kid hung back. "Say," he advised, "we'd best have a drink, before—"

Swipes gave him a curious look. "Come on," he said, "we must hurry."

They took an elevator. At the third floor they got off. Again Swipes started to push ahead, when Kid grasped his arm.

"Listen, Swipes," he pleaded. "I'm afraid I'm not what I used to be. I might go on a still job, sober as a judge, but on a stick-up, we ought to have a drink."

"In this door," said Swipes, and pushed him into a large room where many machines were operating beneath bright lights.

As Swipes spoke pleasantly to men near the door, the situation broke upon Kid Carter. With a look of supreme pain and disappointment he turned upon his friend.

"You—Swipes—want to get me a job!" He was near to tears.

"Please, Mr. Powers," Swipes was saying, "I want you to meet my friend, Harry Carter. I think he would make you a good man."

"My friend!" scorned Kid, hotly. "Where do you get that? Do you think because you're pulling this reform stuff you can get me nuts, too. To hell with you and your job. I'm going back where they get me--not weak-kneed boobs!"

Swipes was blocking his way out.

"Let me go, you s—"

The ugly word was cut to a mere hiss on the lips of Kid Carter by a swift right into his jaw from Gorman. Instantly Kid was mad. In his old gang supremacy days he had fought the fistic battles of Gorman. And now the latter dare attack him! There was another swift move from Gorman. And Kid Carter hit the floor, weak and enervated, but he came back. Again and again he rose gamely, and each time was punished without mercy. At last, bleeding and half senseless, he was hurled to a bench.

Close to his ear he vaguely heard Swipes Gorman say: "Listen, Kid; these guys didn't stop me, because they've seen me trim a couple more like you—smart kids,

burning themselves up with booze, and whining about never having a chance. You used to be able to fight, but this dive stuff's taken all the man out of you. I'm trying to give you a chance, the same one I didn't want to take at first, but one that's made me a real guy. I know you was brought up in a hell-hole, knowing nothing, having nothing. But you're not to old to do better. I ain't got much, but I got it on my own steam, and my little gal, and my kids, and my bit of garden look a heap better than them bars I looked out through a couple of times. I didn't beat you up because I hate you. It's because I like you. You ain't a degenerate like them guys that always stays crooked. You just got started wrong. You can go to hell, if you want to, but I'm begging you to stay and make good, begging you for me, and for yourself, and for—for an awful good friend you got who called me up today and told me about how you're doing." His arm was about Kid's shoulder now, as he concluded, "If you're the man I think you are, by the God that put more good in you than he did bad, you'll stay."

It was an evening three weeks later when Kid sat at the window of the wee living-room of the Gorman home, through which sifted in the soft perfumes of spring. He was laboriously working over a letter. Finally he completed its last paragraph, which read:

"I've been at it three weeks now and like it fine. i guess what Swipes i mene Eddie says is right. Its as easy as bein a crook if you just think so. i would like to come Sunday night. This week i started on day work, and tomorrow i am goin to nite school to lern a lot i thought i didn't need,

Your friend
Harry Carter."

He put the letter into an envelope addressed to Miss Elizabeth Turner. He looked cautiously around and then, for Kid Carter, the hardened, did a foolish thing; he kissed the letter.

At the corner he mailed it. Then he stood for a moment drinking in the delicious twilight air. Involuntarily his eye began picking out open windows over porches on the other side of the street. Then he caught himself, stiffened consciously and walked away.

Down the street he entered a shop, and meekly seated himself before a counter. Then, in a mild voice, he said to the man on the other side, "Chocolate soda!"

IN the November number: THE CURSE OF ALI KHAN *by H. P. Holt.* A gentleman of the East, who wishes to die on land and be buried under a certain banyan tree, puts a curse upon a tramp steamer when he realizes that he must die there and be buried at sea. After that the ship is positively offensive in its actions.

ANN

BY FANNIE DUNAGAN

"The tall, black pines that moaned on each side of the road, left only a rift of hoary light above our heads...'Where are you all going this time of night?' the doctor asked. 'To jail,' I replied, 'for Jimmey's murder.'"

IT was raining that night Jimmy Collins opened his front door and received a load of buckshot in his chest. It was raining when the bloodhounds lost the scent at the swollen river the next morning. And afterwards, at Jimmy's funeral, it drizzled on the bared heads around the open grave. Someone had stretched an umbrella over Ann's head, but she didn't seem to notice. Her big black eyes were fixed on Mighty Knutesen, knotting a rope on the long, rough box. The muscles of his bull neck swelled and gnarled as he heaved his corner before letting the box down into the grave. Jimmy Collins was a heavy corpse.

When the first spade of dirt rattled on the lid, Mighty's eyes caught Ann's, clung to them an instant, then shifted. Turning, he almost fell over the loose clods on his way out. He passed the row of muddy horses hitched to the fence, tightened the old saddle on the freshly curried one on the end, mounted and rode away.

Ann's wild black eyes followed him until he turned the curve, then suddenly she drove her fingers into her pale cheeks and screamed. I handed old Doctor Compton my shovel. When I touched her on her shoulder the flesh quickened and jerked like the flesh of an eel. But she quieted of a sudden, her stark eyes piercing me; —unearthly dry eyes staring out of a face stricken with something fearsome and unfathomable.

Presently I led her away, followed by the crowd, huddled in twos and threes, and whispering under their breath. Old Doctor Compton drove her home in his rickety, warped-wheeled buggy, and I didn't see her again for twelve months.

That night I was arrested for murder. Mighty Knutesen was with the sheriff. He lent me his horse to ride to the county seat. I had gone a mile before I noticed that I was sitting in the new saddle.

"I wonder why Mighty rode his old saddle to the funeral?" It was the first time I had spoken, and the sheriff stared at me like he thought I was muzzy.

"Maybe he didn't want to get his new one wet," he replied.

"Maybe so," I agreed.

We met old Doctor Compton at the cross roads. It was a gloomy night; and the tall, black pines that moaned on each side of the road, left only a rift of hoary light above our heads. But I knew who it was before he spoke, because of the wheeze. Damp weather was bad on the old doctor's quinsy.

"I've just come from Ann's," he told us.

"How is Ann?" I asked anxiously, bending from my saddle and peering into his face.

"Mighty low," he puffed. "The baby died."

"My God!" I groaned.

"Born dead?" the sheriff asked.

"It lived long enough to look at us out of Jimmy's laughing blue eyes," the doctor answered. Then, "Where are you all going this time of night?"

"To jail," I said, "for Jimmy's murder."

The doctor pulled so sharp and sudden on the thin nag that she fell back on her haunches.

"Joe, you didn't kill Jimmy Collins," he wheezed excitedly, when the mare drew up. "You've been a father to Jimmy and Ann. You didn't do it, Joe?" he pleaded.

"No, I didn't do it," I said.

The old doctor came to see me the following week. His quinsy was better, but he looked haggard and worn. He stood fumbling with his hat at the bars, embarrassed and shamed as I stood peeking out.

"Ann is going to get well," he said.

I bowed my head.

"I couldn't let her die," he apologized.

"No," I said, "you couldn't let her die."

"I told her about you this morning."

"How did she take it?" My heart was thumping under my blue shirt.

"I ought to have known better. I thought I'd killed her. I left her quiet."

"She doesn't believe I did it?"

"No, no," he shook his head vigorously. "They had no clue, and they took me because I was there that night."

"You had Jimmy's gun. Ann says she told the constable that. It had been recently fired."

"I told them how it was. I fired after the murderer as he rode off. They can find no reason for the killing Ann's husband."

"Ann blames herself about telling the constable," the doctor said.

"Tell her not to worry. It'll come out all right," I said.

In a way it did come out all right. A year later I was a free man, pale and weak from confinement, and with a cough that held on for months. Free, in spite of Mighty Knutesen's lies—free but under a shadow. When I entered the blacksmith shop that day I got back, Duncan Storm hammered away a full minute before he looked up.

"Back?" he said.

"I'm glad to be back," I said eagerly.

He didn't reply, so I went on to the store. The post-office was in Taylor Lumkin's store, and all Appleville was there to get the mail. Jed Bonnell and old Doctor Compton were the only ones that shook hands,—the least and the greatest of Appleville.

"I'm glad to see you, Joe," the doctor said. "I'll drive you out to your place."

"The courts have got the place," I said.

The doctor looked worried. He knit his shaggy brows and tugged at his thin beard. "What do you expect to do, Joe?" he asked.

I glanced at the crowd of knotted, rugged men, standing off in sullen virtue.

"It's not what I thought it would be, Doctor. I'm bumfuzzled. I'll think it out." My throat ached

"I'll drive you out to my house," the doctor said. Strength is not always of the body, I learned that day.

On our way out we met Ann. She was going to Lumkin's with a bucket of eggs. I caught my first sight of her as she swung out of the path into the road, with that lithe, panther tread that left no sound of footfalls. She didn't know me until she was upon us. Her face faded out to a dull ivory.

"Howdy Joe," she said. "I heard you was to come in today. I'm sure glad to see you back, Joe."

Doctor Compton drew up the mare. When I took her hand it was as cold as ice.

"How are you getting on, Ann?" I asked.

"Fairly," she said. Her big black eyes took me in from head to foot. "You've suffered, Joe," she added.

"Not so much as you have," I said. I didn't like the look in her handsome young eyes. It was hard, like gun metal.

"And we haven't done but the best we could, me and you. You know, Joe, we've always done the best we could. Yet out of all this stiff-necked, under-handed Appleville crowd we've been the unchancy ones. We've been led out naked to the slaughter."

She swung on down the road, after a while, bearing the bucket of eggs on her arm. I looked at the old doctor as he pulled at the reins.

"What's the matter with Ann?" I asked.

We drove on in silence until we reached Jed Bonnell's rocky pasture.

"Death, even murder, doesn't make eyes look like Ann's," I persisted.

"They say that Ann's baby wasn't Jimmy's." The doctor's kind grey eyes were glued to the road ahead.

"Whose, in tarnation, do they say it was?"

"Mighty Knutesen's," the doctor murmured.

The wheels crunched the gravel as we drew up to the doctor's weather-beaten house. The sound grated my nerves like sand-paper.

"Mighty Knutesen put that out," I said.

"It's a lie, Joe. It was the living image of Jimmy—that baby. I told them that it's a lie, but Appleville believes it. Appleville is terribly hard on Ann."

"I guess I'll have to kill Mighty," I said.

The next day I went over to see Ann. It was only a mile over and I walked, cutting through the pine woods by the cow trail. I had been thinking all night and I was still thinking hard. Mighty Knutesen had lorded it over Appleville with his huge bulk of a body and his domineering manner. And simple Appleville seemed glad to knuckle, glad to follow in his lead. Only once had he been frustrated. That was when Ann chose to marry light-hearted Jimmy Collins instead of him. He was getting his revenge now, and Appleville in her chaste ignorance was abetting him. Tomorrow I would kill him. There was nothing else to do.

As I neared Ann's little gray, unpainted house set back in the clearing, I missed the flowers. The front yard was overgrown with weeds, and the soil in the porch boxes was hard and cracked and parched. Ann met me at the door.

"I'm sure glad you're back, Joe," she said. I knew she spoke the truth.

"I'd a-been back before now if it hadn't been for Mighty's lies," I returned.

An odd look came into Ann's big eyes, her drooping lips hung lower, destroying her beauty for the instant.

"I wonder why Mighty wanted my head in the noose?" I asked, when Ann set a chair.

She held her finger to her lips in warning. Through the crack in the door that led to the kitchen, I saw the keen black eyes of Ann's aunt. Afterwards she came in.

"Aunt Debby might talk," Ann explained, when she had returned to the kitchen.

I nodded understandingly.

"Me and Mighty are going to be married tomorrow," Ann said.

I looked at her blankly.

"Maybe I misunderstand you, Ann," I choked.

"Me and Mighty are going to be married tomorrow," she repeated. Her face had a greenish pallor, her fists were clenched tight in her lap.

Somehow, all at once, the world seemed to go wrong. I couldn't understand the whys and wherefores. My brain burnt in front of my head.

"I mean to kill Mighty tomorrow," I said rising.

"That wouldn't do, Joe." She steadied herself with the back of her chair.

"I'll kill him tonight instead." I glanced at Jimmy's rifle swinging from the deer horns above her mantle board.

"No, you won't!" she cried. "No, you won't, Joe." She was at my side clutching at my sleeve. "That would mean death for you—the mob maybe." She fell back, facing me defiantly. "This is my affair. You keep out of it!"

"Suppose I said I killed him because he lied on the witness stand?" I retorted.

"You'd be lying then yourself," she returned.

"I let Mighty live. Next day he and Ann were married. Appleville said it was a shame for Mighty to throw himself away on that hussy—all except Jed Bonnell and old Doctor Compton. Jed Bonnell, with his ramshackle old frame, and his ramshackle old first Monday horses, and his rabbit warren pasture, was outside the pale of Appleville. Jed Bonnell's silence was as loud as his opinion. But sitting by his pine-knot fire that night, the old doctor said that Mighty had tried to hang me to rid himself of my influence with Ann; that he had put out about Ann's baby to bring her low before she'd have him.

"Ann's not brought low," I said. "You can't bring a woman like Ann low if she's not low. Ann wouldn't compromise with Appleville's opinion to save her life."

"What did Mighty lie about Ann's baby for?" he wheezed.

"So he could get her."

The doctor turned a puzzled look in my direction. The firelight made his wizened face look ghastly.

"Mighty thinks he brought Ann to marry him by his lies, but he didn't," I said.

The doctor rolled his thumbs over and over. His breath came in short gasps. He was afraid of what he going to ask.

"What did she marry him for?" he whispered.

"I don't know," I said.

I didn't hear anything from Appleville that winter. I got work in the Antioch neighborhood down by the bayou. In the spring the mosquitoes got so bad I had to go back to the hills. I stopped over with old Doctor Compton as I was passing through Appleville.

"How is Ann getting on?" I asked, the first thing.

"Go and see Ann, Joe," was the doctor's reply.

"How is she getting on?" I asked again.

"It's hard to tell about Ann. Her eyes are getting larger every day and her face smaller. Mighty has got to drinking. You must go and see her, Joe."

"I couldn't go in Mighty's house," I said.

"It's Ann's house," the doctor said.

I went the day following. When Ann came into the room I was shocked. The roundness had gone from her form, leaving her lean and swarthy, and the luster from her straight black hair. Her countenance was all eyes—black and terrible. One of her sleeves was cut off at the shoulder and her arm was bandaged.

"Have you been sick?" I asked her.

"No," she said, "I am never sick."

"What's the matter with your arm?" I asked.

All the blood in her body pumped to her cheeks, leaving two round spots about the size of a dime. "I got it hurt," she said.

I didn't stay long. It was plain that Ann was fighting some kind of gruesome existence that she intended to fight alone.

That night I was awakened by a loud pounding at Doctor Compton's door. I raised up on my elbow and listened. Somebody was after the doctor for Debby Truax. She had had a fit or something, and Ann had said for the doctor to hurry. I got up and dressed. When I looked out I saw Big Hand, the nigger that lived on Ann's place, hitching up the doctor's horse.

When the doctor got in his buggy, I climbed in by his side. The nag was old, but she did her best that night. We rattled down the sandy road, the moonlight winding in between the trees like a river, and the death-watch beetle ticking time to the katydid out of the blackness on each side. It was blackberry weather, and I pulled my coat up high about my neck. When we turned into the clearing, the lamp in Ann's house was moving about like a swamp corpse-candle, and as we drew up, Jed Bonnell's peakish face peered at us over the gate.

"I heerd Big Hand's horse runnin' at break-neck speed," he whined. "I got up an' come over." He lowered his voice, and his scared eyes stuck out like blue knobs. "Somethin' turrible has happened," he whimpered.

We passed on into the house. At sight of us, Debby jerked her skinny little frame up with a bounce. She pointed her skeleton finger towards the back door.

"He's drunk in there," she quaked. "He did it. Ann told him she knowed he did it, all the time. I fell in a fit." She sank back in bed, shaking until the slats creaked.

Ann had her hand on the knob of the back door. For an instant she stood looking at us, her face like a death mask; then she turned the knob.

"Don't come in here again!" It was Mighty's voice. By the muddy sound I knew he was drunk. "Don't come in here, I say, with them black eyes. I'll kill you if you do!"

"Like you did Jimmy?" asked Ann, in a dull voice.

"Like I did Jimmy!" he came back, with a thick oath.

There was a clumsy noise at the front door. Jed Bonnel had come in.

"What did he say?" he quavered, "that he killed Jimmy Collins? Did he say that he killed Jimmy Collins? I saw him leavin' here that night. I was late gettin' in

with my horses. He passed me in the rain. I was late gettin' in from the sale."

Ann was standing in the room. "You heard what he said, you three?" Her eyes swept us with such appalling fire that we shriveled under the glance. "He killed Jimmy. I knew it the day Jimmy was buried." She swayed, gripping the foot of the bed. "Why do you stand there staring at me?" she shrieked. "I saw it in his eyes when he was tying the rope around Jimmy's coffin. He had swum the river that night. I knew it by his curried horse—by his old saddle."

Doctor Compton had her in his arms.

"Get the constable," he nodded at Jed.

There was a heavy crash in the back room, and old Debby jumped out of bed in her short night gown, screeching at the top of her voice. I took her up bodily and dumped her back. Then I went to the back door and looked in. Mighty lay spraddled on the floor dead drunk.

"I swore I would have it out of him the night my baby died." Ann was crouched in the chair where the doctor had placed her. She had come to, and she didn't look human. "I did it. I knew he'd tell. He thought he'd break me by telling. Look at my arm!" She ripped the bandage off with a sudden twist. It was black from the shoulder to the wrist, and above the elbow was a wide, deep gash. "He did that! I'm scars all over." Her eyes flashed. "But I stood it. I knew he'd tell." She buried her face in her hands, her straight black hair streaming through her fingers. "Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy," she moaned, rocking back and forth, "Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy!"

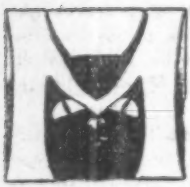
There was a sound of horses feet dashing through the clearing. A dozen grim, determined men threw their reins over the rail fence. Their rifles glistened in the moonlight. And Mighty lay in the back room dead drunk.

NEXT month: AN OUTRAGE OR SO *by William Hamilton Osborne,* introducing D. Dacres, counselor at law, and Gertie Gilfoil, law clerk. Dacres and Gilfoil, who wish to clear a condemned state senator, put one over on the state boss, who simply wants a ninety-six per cent discount on a twenty-five million dollar canal belonging to the people. ("Settled Out of Court," a story by the same author, appears in this issue. See page 7.)

THE LITTLE TIN BOX

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

The Watch and Ward man of a construction company thinks that a twelve inch girder four hundred feet above the street is no place for a nervous man. He fortifies his courage with the wrong kind of nerve tonic.



MORGAN, foreman of the Hudson-Gerard Construction Company, swinging on a narrow plank four hundred feet above the sidewalk, whistled a tune as he glanced around at the unclothed ribs of the giant sky-scraper he was throwing heavenwards. Far below human ants looked up through the clear air at the gaunt skeleton, their white, upturned faces, round and featureless, reminding the foreman of full-blown flowers on bulky stalks.

The watchers attracted Morgan. Sitting down on the plank, with legs dangling in space, he stared into the stone-walled canyon up and down which the human current flowed unceasingly. The peculiar weird expectancy which seemed to chain the little groups watching the aerial workers interested him. He had never looked at the crowds before, but some absurd analytical kink had just manifested itself in his mind, and he gratified it. He tried to understand the fascination which held men motionless hour after hour till their aching necks rebelled at the torture. Unconsciously, a hate of the crowd welled up within the foreman. He felt that they were waiting for something to happen. The motionless groups were uncanny. He noted those who stopped only for a moment, hurrying away with quick, upward glances, as if fearful lest the disaster pictured by their imagination might take place before they could shut out the nerve-tingling scene. Others stopped, backed carefully out of the current, and, shouldering the wall, settled down for prolonged spells of keen watching.

The foreman started to reason quietly to himself. "There's no fascination in seeing men work," he murmured, "so it's the fascination of seeing men in danger. Increase the danger, and you increase the spine-tickles that keep those loafers peeping upwards. Where does it end? I honestly believe that a percentage of those dough-faced galoots stand for hours on the chance of seeing one of us do a toboggan slide through the ether. That's all they're waiting for, damn 'em."

In some peculiar manner the expressed conclusion pulled into his conscious mind the image of Johnson, who was known on the job as "Gerard's Pet." Morgan sat wondering a moment, then laughed queerly. From the pocket of his jacket he took a small tin box about two inches square, and sniffed at its contents.

"If Johnson has been chewing this stuff long I guess he'll give those sun-gapers a sensation one of these days," he muttered. "Old 'Gerard's Pet,' eh? Nerves on the blink! Carries his little box of nerve dope round with him! The foxy Johnson! What the hell does he want up in the clouds?"

Again he stared down into the tremendous abyss as if he expected an answer to his question to drift up with the faint, ghostly sounds of the heavy traffic. He noticed that the little groups were increasing, and he looked for a reason. There was nothing unusual happening, but the mesh of iron and steel seemed to attract pedestrians.

Presently Morgan laughed uneasily. "Damn 'em," he cried, "I believe they're watching me. They are, sure. I'm in it! 'Gerard's Pet' watching me on top and the crowd watching me below!"

He shook his fist at the spectators, stood

up on the plank and climbed cautiously along it.

"Watching me," he muttered, "the damn buzzards! They're hungry for a tragedy. If they watch Johnson—Johnson minus his little tin box—they might get a run. At any rate I'm going to watch him now. He must have lost that at lunch time, and if he's been chewing it regular I guess the loss of it will begin to upset his grit before the day is out."

Crawling carefully along the narrow bridge, he climbed into the cobweb of steel beams and looked back at the crowd from a position of comparative safety.

"The dough-faced loafers," he murmured. "It's funny I never thought till to-day what kept 'em watching and watching."

Wondering how he had overlooked this powerful incentive to the morbid minded, he stepped cautiously along the brink of the shadowy abyss that lay between the tremendous girders, and as he walked he muttered continually:

"'Gerard's Pet', eh? Put up to watch me, and has to chew a morsel of opium to keep his nerve up. Guess he's craving a pick-me-up now."

At the southern end of the gigantic frame, which towered, black and ugly over the surrounding buildings, he stopped and peered around. Johnson was standing upon a great triangle of steel, directing half a dozen men who were climbing along the iron threads where the wind, after lulling them with occasional moments of calm, attacked them with fierce, strong gusts in their moments of unpreparedness.

Morgan stepped out on the triangle and stood near "The Pet," but Johnson gave no indication that he was aware of his presence. The foreman's animus was ill-concealed and the other was a hyper-sensitive person. The hammers clanged ceaselessly and the skeleton thrilled under the blows. Away out on the bay the robes of the goddess were embroidered with gold as the sun sank lower. The puffing steamers appeared to be sailing immediately beneath, and Morgan's eyes passed over Johnson and studied the scene. The foreman was in a meditative mood, and it was mainly because these moods were increasing lately that "The Pet" had been put on the job.

Johnson was a slight, nervous man, with shifty eyes. Morgan's contemptuous silence irritated him. Standing with his back turned, he felt the gaze of the foreman playing over him like a searchlight. He felt it on his head, on the back of his neck, even on his hands. Suddenly he turned quickly to find Morgan looking over towards Europe.

Johnson moistened his lips and stammered violently as he moved the men along. "The Pet's" left hand strayed upwards, but when it had reached his pocket it was suddenly jerked back to his side. Three times the hand tried to forage in the pocket, and three times it was jerked away. Johnson's mind was certain that the tin box was lost, but Johnson's nerves, tautened by the presence of the silent foreman, urged the twitching fingers to continue the search.

Presently Morgan laughed and Johnson looked at him inquiringly.

"I was just thinking of those infernal watchers down there on the sidewalk," explained the foreman. "I never knew till to-day what keeps 'em there."

"And what does keep them there?" asked Johnson.

"Why, they're waiting to see one of us flop," replied the discoverer, "just hanging 'round thinking one of us will lose his nerve and take a header."

Johnson wrinkled his face into a sickly smile and again moistened his dry lips. Morgan had timed his visit well.

"I don't think that is the reason," he stammered, "they're interested in the work."

The foreman laughed contemptuously. "I know 'em," he cried, "I've been studying them to-day."

Again the foraging hand crept upward, and again it was jerked swiftly back. Its owner made an attempt to change the subject.

"Farley sent down a note about that iron," he spluttered, "he wants you—"

"Look," interrupted Morgan, "just look

how they're lining up down there. What for, I would like to know? There's nothing particular doing."

Johnson stared out across the bay.

"Not there," snapped the foreman. "Right beneath you, man. Down under your feet. They're cursed ghouls."

"The Pet" moved back a few inches from the extreme apex of the triangle. He turned his face to Morgan and the gray eyes of the student of crowds noted his livid cheeks.

"Move along," muttered Johnson, "I'm going in."

Morgan didn't move. "Crowd unnerve you?" he sneered.

"No," snapped "The Pet."

"What's up, then?"

"Nothing."

"I thought your nerves were going back on you," grinned the foreman.

Johnson's left hand was foraging blindly in his jacket pocket.

"You think too much," he stammered. "Move a little."

"Just oblige me by going 'round the other way," murmured Morgan. "I've got my eye on a batch of hungry buzzards down there and I don't want to lose sight of them."

Johnson turned towards the apex and moved a few paces cautiously.

"I knew a man," remarked the foreman, critically eyeing the other, "whose nerve went on the blink at this game. He took to drugs."

"Yes," muttered Johnson, half turning to look at the speaker.

"Yes," repeated Morgan, "he took to opium, or some stuff like it, and the crowd got sensation one day. He forgot his box or lost it or something—"

"The Pet" wheeled swiftly. "You hound," he snarled. "You—you took it."

The foreman grinned. "Don't upset yourself," he murmured, "your nerves are rocky sure."

"Give it up," shrieked Johnson. "Give it up!"

Morgan took the little tin box from his pocket and tossed it towards the other. They were but a few feet apart, but at that moment a sudden gust of wind whirled up from the bay and the box was swept to the left of the narrow bridge. Johnson tried to keep his arm at his side, but the effort was beyond him. It leapt out after the bit of tin, which flashed in the sunlight, and losing his balance, he sprawled forward along the girder. Morgan tried to backstep quickly, but Johnson's right arm swung like a band of iron around his ankles; and, locked together, they followed the little tin box.

FOR October: AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT *by Roy Davis,* which tells how an international boundary stone was stolen to make a hitching post.

THE CRAZY CHRIS LODE

BY LOUIS SCHNEIDER

An aged pocket-miner, who is a long suffering object of ridicule, rigs up a Goldberg contrivance to fool his tormentors and eliminate the necessity of an undertaker when he dies.

LD Chris Hopf, heavily loaded with his camp kit, fairly dragging his feet up the slope to where his cabin stood, stumbled over a newly driven stake which, in the twilight, he had not seen. He slumped the blade of his long-handled shovel to the ground and recovered his balance. With a muttered word or two, he turned to look for the cause of his mishap. At once he was all lively attention.

After he had made certain what the object was, he suddenly brought his shovel down on it with a thwack.

"Huh! Ever since old Chris stakes off his claim and sticks a shack on that old slide you calls him a fool. Now what? Staking!"

He turned and shook a gnarled index finger at the few lights which already appeared in Big Ace, distributing point for the camps above, lying where the foot of the slope leveled out to the forks of the river.

"I looks into that—right off," he promised.

Several hours later he entered the long room of Prout's, the biggest store in camp. His dim eyes blinked and watered as they met the light.

"Hello, Chris," Prout greeted him heartily. "What luck this week?"

"Well, I tells you, Prout, it's this way: It makes no difference how much I pans out in a week, so it's only a dollar. If I spends only seventy-five cents when I makes a dollar, I'm always ahead, ain't I, huh? That's like I always done, and—I dies in nobody's pore-house, either, you Jim Pinney!" he ended fiercely, turning to a group by the stove. "I pays my way, I bet you!"

"I never said nothin'," complained a tall hatchet-faced young fellow with old eyes, winking at the rest, "never said a thing."

"You don't have to. You a long time ago said too much already, you—you—" The old man was quivering.

"Let's see your sack," said Prout.

The old man fumbled in a capacious pocket and brought out a dirty buckskin pouch and passed it over. Prout opened it and weighed out the trickling of yellow dust which it contained.

"Beats last week a little, Chris," he announced. "Good for you!"

"Must a hit that lode," commented Pinney.

Chris whirled on him. "Never you minds my lode! Some day you hears something that makes you wish you had my claim. When I strikes it—"

"When you strike, some of us others will too," grinned Pinney.

"Huh? So it's you that staked!" Chris divined.

Pinney nodded. "Me and three or four of the other boys,—all around you. I'm right west."

Chris fixed his eye on him. "If I'm such a fool like you says for sticking up there on that slide, why for did you want to do it, huh?"

Pinney winked again. "Fixin' for our old age."

Hob Jepson, tilted forward on two legs of a chair in a darker corner, nursing his black-sweated pipe in both hands, elbows on knees, spoke up in his slow drawl without taking the stem from his mouth.

"Let up on him, Pinney."

"Why—he like it! Don't you, Chris?"

"It's sure I didn't cry for to have you for a neighbor!"

"Better buy us out, then," suggested Pinney.

"There ain't loose money enough in this whole county to buy you out at what your claim's worth; nor the one on the east of me. You see, I figger that—"

"Ow—ow! You mean to tell me there ain't thirty dollars in this whole county? My gosh!" Pinney simulated a tremulous fear and rolled his eyes. "My gosh, boys, we'll all land in the poorhouse yet!"

Jepson brought his chair to all fours with a smash, but before he could say a word, Chris was speaking.

"Thirty dollars you say buys you out? Fix up your papers. Prout, give him that much out of what I got with you."

"There's three of us boys strung out below you," broke in another lounger. "Maybe you'd like to buy us out too."

"How much?"

"Hold on, Chris," broke in Prout. "Don't—"

Chris waved him aside. "How much?" he asked again.

The other looked at his companions. "Well, we'll call this bargain day, and say about twenty-four ninety-eight. How's that suit you boys?"

"All right," was the chorus.

"You've sold something. Now, who staked to the east of me?" Chris was openly eager.

"Mart Braley, there."

"I won't sell straight out," declared the one indicated. "I'll do you like folks used to do the oil men back in Pennsylvany, where I come from. I'll sell it to you for the same figure you give Pinney, but you've got to sign a contract to give me an eighth of what you make out of it. I'd hate to see any one man hog it all,— especially you."

Chris hung back, scarcely knowing how to take this.

"Would you turn over that eighth interest to anybody else except Chris?" Jepson asked suddenly.

"I might."

"How much?"

"Oh, to be honest with you," yawned Braley, "I 'low it's worth about six bits."

"Sold," declared Jepson, in spite of the laugh that Braley's words had provoked. "And I'm going to stick to it."

The transfers were made the next day.

"Well, you fell for it, Chris," derided Pinney when all was over. "You've got something, such as it is. Buying and everything—it'll cut a big hole in what you had laid back. Some of these days, if something should happen, you'll find out you're broke. Don't it scare you, Chris?"

The old man began to look this way and that, and fear began to creep into his eyes. "I—I makes it," he said. "It's there and—and I ain't too old yet to find it, I aint."

"Don't worry. If anything happens to you, Chris, we'll take care of you," Pinney assured him with solemn face.

"Shut up, you!" snapped Jepson. "Chris, any time you should run low, which I don't 'low you will, I'll let you have enough to run you till you strike that lode." Pinney laughed from the doorway, and Jepson glared him out over Chris's head. "Don't pay any attention to him. It's there, Chris, and—"

"But—what if—if it ain't?" whispered Chris, in a tremor, as Jepson steered him back to where Prout was busy with his books. "What if it ain't? It ought to be under that old slide, but I prospects all over my old claim, and don't strike it. And I ain't as young as I used to be. They—they got me excited, and maybe—maybe I bought too much. I'd hate to—hate to— Well, maybe, I'll strike it before it comes to—that!"

"Tut!" chirked Jepson. "Don't worry. I helped you get shut of that bunch of loafers, and I'll give you a lift any time you need it."

"Jepson," quavered Chris, "for over sixty years I fights my own way—never even allows any man to grub-stake me since I starts hunting gold—and I—I can't start—that—now. Damn that Pinney! He scares me. I got to strike it before it comes to—that! I know how you feels about it, Jepson. Your heart's in the right place, but you don't understand."

"I think I do," Jepson nodded soberly.

On the next Saturday night Chris appeared again with his dirty pouch, and there was elation in his bearing. He snapped his fingers under Pinney's nose.

"We'll see, young feller, we'll see! I cleared up an extra dollar a day down on the river this week. I makes it through yet, in spite of your croaking."

"Next week your luck may go back on you."

"We'll see; we'll see! As long as I lives, I makes it, I bet you! When I dies, I goes like—that! Till then I makes it!"

"Sure! But even if you panned out a million on your last day, you'd still have to let somebody do something for you. Somebody'll have to bury you sometime, you know."

Chris shrank into himself and shuffled away, his lower lip clipped between his teeth.

The next few Saturday nights passed without his rising to the bait of gibes which Pinney threw at him. He was glum and moody, and stayed in Prout's only long enough to transact his little business, then he would climb back to his cabin.

"Old Chris has broke out in a new place," announced one of the men one evening. "Half the time the last couple of weeks he's been settin' in front of his shack whittlin' on little sticks of wood that he's been fittin' together. About the time it looks like he's got somethin' about finished, he'll stomp it to pieces and start on somethin' else."

"I noticed he wasn't bringing in as much dust any more on Saturdays," remarked Prout.

The other nodded. "Well, finally he's quit whittlin' and now he's started to build the funniest lookin' contraption over that shaft he dug up back of his shack last fall that I ever seen over a shaft. Four high posts and a lot of cross pieces this way and that, and—I don't know what. Say, but he got mad when I sauntered up and ast him what was it."

The next day the same man reported again. "Now what do you reckon? Old Chris chopped down that contraption over the shaft I told you about. Chopped 'er spang down and burned 'er up!"

Some time later, Chris came down to the camp and sprang a new surprise. There was a gleam in his eye as he sprung it.

"I wants the roof tore off my shack, and the walls raised four more logs high all around, and I wants a loft put in it just the way I says I wants it."

"That's goin' to cost you right sharp," Pinney pointed out to him in solicitous tones.

"Tend your own business," Chris sent back, "and I tends mine. And while I tends it I manages to fool you, young feller,—see if I don't. I ain't just plumb clear yet how I does it, but I got the main idee."

He stood before Prout's water cask, filling a rusty cup at the spigot. This full, he held it while he finished speaking. The drip from the tiny leak kept striking his booted foot. Eventually he became aware of it. He held the cup at crooked arm's-length and watched the drops form and fall away. With a sudden motion he flung the cup away.

"I got it!" he chuckled to himself in uncanny glee. "I got it! Why, sure! sure!"

Still chuckling, he hobbled out and away.

"Crazy Chris, sure enough!" ejaculated Pinney.

One of those who helped Chris remodel his cabin voiced the general opinion of all who had helped, by echoing Pinney's words.

"Crazy, sure enough," he announced. "When it comes to puttin' in j'ists, he wouldn't have solid timber. All of 'em had to be spliced. All the splices along one side, too. Wouldn't let us lay the splices side by side, nor nail 'em, either. Short splice had to be on top. Said they'd be stronger that way. And then what do you think? Made us tie 'em with rope at the left side of the shack as you go in! The idee! But what you goin' to do with an old loon like him? He's goin' to put the floor in hisself."

Jepson sat in his usual place and said nothing while Chris was being discussed.

One day he drew Prout out to one side.

"Old Chris ain't bringin' in any dust any more."

"No."

"And he's been spendin' quite a lot lately."

"Yes."

"How's he stand with you?"

"Safe—yet."

Jepson drew hard on his pipe several times.

"Any time he gets close to the line,—don't say anything to him about it; just let me know. He's gettin' so he won't notice such things—if he keeps on at this clip."

Prout surveyed him a moment. "Know what he's done?"

"What?"

"Came in here some time back and made his will in your favor."

Jepson's jaw fell for an instant. "The—devil—you—say," he remarked, and went back and sat down heavily.

"Said you come the nearest of anybody to understanding him," Prout added.

Chris Hopf grew more silent as the weeks crept by. Besides his usual line of groceries and the kerosine for his lamp and lantern, he purchased little. The extras included a large lard can and a lot of packing excelsior, which latter he said he needed to re-stuff his mattress. He grew to walking with a cunning, sidewise motion, as though he would slink by unseen with some delectably reprehensible secret. More and more he kept clear of others,—except where Pinney was concerned.

Whenever he met Pinney he would make it a point to pass close to him.

"Heh, heh, heh!" he would cackle in a split high hey, "heh, heh, heh! Fool you—see if I don't! See if I don't!"

"Let up, you old fool, you!" barked Pinney, when finally the gibes he gave in return no longer showed a disquieting effect on the old man. "Let up. You're gettin' on my nerves!"

"I'll fool you," Chris nodded with an air of biting satisfaction. "Money may be running low, and my knees is giving out, but they both lasts long enough so I fools you. See if I don't! Heh, heh, heh!"

"Yeah? You ain't been pannin' down on the river lately, so's anybody noticed, and you ain't started no new prospect holes. So you'll—"

"I ain't, ain't I?" leered Chris. He came up and started to tap on Pinney's chest with a grimy finger. Pinney backed away. "Listen, while I tells you again. I fools lots of folks in my day already, and—heh, heh, heh!—I fools you, too, young feller!"

After noon of the following Tuesday, Mart Braley came into Prouts.

"What old Chris is doin' I'd like for somebody to tell me. I've been keepin' an eye in that direction since he's got to actin' so funny, but, just the same, he's got a pile of rocks together up there by his shack that he never put there of day times, and that he got, I don't know where. And he's got holes gouged out all around the shack, too, and no sign of where the dirt went to. Ain't seen a thing of him outside, either, for quite a spell. That old man'll go plumb crazy yet, and we'll have him on our hands."

Prout looked at Jepson, sitting in his wonted place. "He hasn't been down here since about this time last week," he remarked.

The conversation ran to other things. Jepson took no part in it, but sat nodding in his chair. Suddenly he sat up.

"Why—say!" he ejaculated. He took his pipe from his mouth, let go with one hand, and laid hold on his face—thumb on one cheek and fingers on the other—and allowed the weight of his hand to hang there. It drew his face out long. He sat staring into his pipe for all of fifteen seconds, motionless.

"I'll bet—" he exclaimed then, and got up more quickly than he had in ten years. He didn't say another word, but struck out and up the slope in the direction of Chris's cabin as fast as his crooked old legs would carry him.

First the members of the group looked at one another in inquiry, and then some of them began to straggle to the door and look after him. As soon as it was certain that he was headed for the cabin, they began to follow. Prout told his helpers to

stay with the business and followed after.

Jepson went straight but cautiously up to Chris's door. Instead of rapping, however, he put his ear to the door and listened. He kept it there a long time, his attitude strained.

Finally he straightened, and his hand reached for the latch, but he withdrew it. Once more he applied his ear to the door. In the end, he slipped a pace or two and surveyed the door with occassional puzzled shakings of his head that kept bringing his face farther about. So he caught sight of the pile of rocks which Braley had told of, and the holes where he had scooped out dirt.

"Of course," he mused, "he wouldn't have felt them rock at all, but—"

He tiptoed away, and beckoned the rest after him.

"Boys, I'm satisfied that the old man's in there, and that there's something wrong with him,—that he's sick some way, I mean. Of course, he's been a little queer for a long time. Now—"

"Queer!" sniggered Pinney. "Well, I should say!"

Jepson swung about, his eyes flashing. A long, lank arm, with an open threatening palm, came around and halted within a few inches of the surprised Pinney's cheek.

"No—you ain't wuth it!" spat the old man as he brought himself under control. "You ain't wuth slappin', you and the passel of fools as has nagged old Chris into bein' what he is. Remember all the figgerin' and whittlin' he's been doin' since you commenced pickin' an him about a time comin' when he'd have to let somebody do somethin' for him whether he wanted 'em to or not?"

"That didn't mean nothin'," averred Pinney. "It was all in fun."

"Yes?" prodded Jepson. "Remember that thing he started to build over that prospect hole some time back?"

The question needed no answer.

"Let me tell you fools somethin'," the old man continued. "You all picked on him too much. I've been thinkin' and figgerin' so much over what the old man's been doin' and sayin' the last few weeks that, just a little while ago, when I was settin' down there, without thinkin' I was thinkin' about it at all, the answer popped into my head all at once. Know what the answer is?"

Pinney fidgeted, but no one said a word.

"I'll tell you. That old man's been plannin' to fool you, just like he said he was. Where and how? Right where you'd think he couldn't. That old man's laid plans to beat everybody, even his friends out of the chance to lay hands on him when he's dead. He's fixin' to bury himself when the time comes! That riggin' over that prospect hole was for—"

There was a startled gasp from the crowd.

"Anyhow, that's how it struck me," continued Jepson. "Of course, I don't know, but—Chris ain't been outside for the last couple of days. Maybe he ain't able to be up. Whether he's got such a contraption as I think in there, I don't know, but I'm going to find out—right now."

He went to the door and tried the latch quietly. It rose easily and allowed the door to swing inward. The burst of light disclosed surprising things.

Chris Hopf had constructed for himself a cot in the middle of the floor of the cabin. Ropes had been stretched from side to side of a stout rectangular frame, one side of which nearly reached the wall to the left. The cot rested on the ropes near the inner edge of this frame, and beneath and over the ropes at the other edge there was ridged loose excelsior. A narrow line of excelsior reached from this to near the head of the cot, which was farthest from the door. Here there was an elevated contrivance which employed the lard can that the old man had bought from Prout. There was a smell of kerosene in the air.

Jepson stooped and tiptoed inside. Prout motioned to the others to keep out of the light, and followed. Just to the right of the door Chris had erected an inclined ladder leading to the loft, and after having satisfied himself that the old man was not in the room, Jepson started up. He stepped back with a grimace and a gripping of his stiff knees, and nodded to Prout.

Prout went up cautiously. What he saw caused his jaw to drop. Finally he came back down slowly.

"Hell!" he whispered in awe. "This shack is a regular deadfall. That old man has carried half a carload of dirt up into that loft!"

Jepson nodded. He pointed to the swayed and rope-lashed joists. From the end of the ridge of excelsior nearest the door there ran loose ropes to each of the rope lashings overhead. Jepson went over and examined them. He tried them between finger and thumb. After a sniff he thrust his hand under Prout's nose.

"Coal oil!" ejaculated Prout under his breath.

"Everywhere on the excelsior and ropes. Smell it?"

Jepson picked his way to the head of the cot among the ropes along the floor. The lard can he found full of water. Beneath was a balanced contrivance which interested him.

"I told you so!" he triumphed to Prout, still in a whisper. "See here. Pull this little plug in the big can and let the water drip, and after so long a time this little can down here, gettin' full, would overbalance this rock on the other end of this board and shake it off. That'd jerk this other rock with the matches tied to it along the floor and light 'em. They'd land in this excelsior. See what'd happen? So many days after he couldn't tend to this trigger work anymore, the whole thing would burn and dump that dirt on him before the fire could reach him."

"Yes, but these?" Prout wanted to know, kicking on the ropes among which they stood.

Once more Jepson drew his face out long between thumb and fingers, deep in puzzled thought.

"And Chris—where is he?"

As if in answer there came a muttering and chuckling—from beneath their feet, it seemed. Prout moved away quickly, but Jepson stooped and lifted the edge of the cot. Suddenly he flung it quite over and out on the floor. Beneath where it had lain yawned a hole in the floor.

Jepson dropped to his knees and peered into its dark depths. Again came the muttering and chuckling, this time more clearly.

"I—I fooled 'em!" exulted the weak voice of old Chris Hopf, "fooled 'em like I said I would!"

Jepson started to swing himself down among the ropes, but came back and hobbled around to beyond where the head of the cot had been.

"Quick—bring his lantern—or lamp! Careful with your matches, though."

He struck a match himself and started down what they had overlooked—a steep series of steps which led into the hole from the back side.

At the bottom he found Chris Hopf. The old man was huddled face down, and when Jepson would have picked him up he snarled savagely and clung to the rough floor of the hole. Jepson tried again, and the old man twisted about and fastened his teeth in the nearest lifting arm. Jepson dropped him and shook free.

"Prout! A light!" he cried.

"Coming! Couldn't find the lantern."

"It's down here—out!"

By the light of the smoky lamp, with a rim of faces dim at the rim of the hole above them, they once more tried to pull Chris Hopf to his feet. He turned suddenly, sat down, and glared up at them.

"Oh, it's—you, Jepson?" he wheezed. "All right—then. Old Chris—fooled 'em Not one way—but another, Jepson. He fooled 'em—fooled 'em! Heh! heh, heh! —fooled 'em, one way, so he wouldn't—have to another. Heh, heh! He was just about—done for—every way—but he makes it through now. Kind f took—the insides out of—Old Chris when he found it. Look, Jepson, look!"

He rolled weakly to one side and lay panting. One crooked index finger quivered ecstatically above the floor. Prout lowered the lamp.

Down to bedrock on the old slide, the old man had uncovered a broad, yellow-shot band that gleamed softly in its richness.

"God-a-mighty!" Prout erupted in an awe-struck voice, "he's struck 'er! Boys, Chris has struck his lode!"

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

BY EARL G. CURTIS

Richmond Ed wanders in from the road with a story "founded on fact" and a witness for the prosecution. He proceeds to convince his partner that "truth is stranger than fiction."

SLOKER was visibly astonished when Richmond Ed, accompanied by a terribly shabby youth, entered the eating room of Wander Inn. Just four days had elapsed since Sloker's hard-faced pardner had flung him a curt "so long," thus burdening his fat shoulders with all the cares appertaining to the management of the dingy restaurant and the half-score sleeping rooms above.

When Ed's feet became restive, and he forsook the comforts of the Inn for the hazards of the open road, weeks were apt to pass with no word from him. Sloker knew that a few days of wandering could never bridle the restless feet of his pardner. Something out of the ordinary had happened to bring him back so soon.

Followed by the boy, Ed stalked down the aisle between the rows of oil-clothed tables, and Sloker surveyed his youthful companion with interest. It was not at all like Ed to bring home company from the road. The boy was about fourteen; his clothes were grimy, splotched with the stain of illegitimate travel; his face was girlish, the chin being particularly effeminate. That the lad had found life a thing to distrust was plainly discernible in his shrinking attitude as he neared Sloker.

"So help me Harry, Ed," Sloker greeted. "What brought you in so quick?"

"Th' kid there," Ed spoke brusquely. "Feed us, Sloker, feed us."

Ed and the boy ate ravenously. While they were easing the pangs of hunger, Sloker sat near, patiently sucking his odorous corn-cob. Presently Ed Walked to the cigar case up front and returned with a package of cheroots, one of which he lighted. Sloker called a dusky servitor to clear the table.

"Sloker," Ed casually remarked, "most peculiar things happen in this here world. Th' guy what first said that truth was more strange an' interesting than lies, had th' right dope. Last week I thought I was kissing old Richmond a goodbye that would have to last her for quite a while —an' here I am. Didn't stay out long enough to wear th' smell of Seventeenth Street offen me. I headed up th' river on a freight, an' night before last I found myself in a box car on a siding near a little burg in K-y-ky.

"'Twas there I met up with th' kid here. He slipped into my private apartments like he was uneasy in spirit, an' when he found out he had company he begins to whine like a puppy what had been kicked in th' slats. Whatever nerve he had ever had had went. I opened my heart an' slipped him a mouthful of sympathy, an' th' kid unloaded on me.

"Sloker, he spun me a yarn 'bout a hard guy—a guy who, when things broke against him, played his hand to a grand finish like a man among men.

"Here's th' way I got it. Th' kid's oldest brother had been borned with restless feet, like many another good man. He took to th' road so long ago that th' kid couldn't even remember what he looked like. During all th' years during which th' kid was growing up from a baby, his brother never once stuck a foot under th' old kitchen table, an' th' kid heard mighty little 'bout him. By this time, th' kid's own feet was getting restless. They also wanted to hit th' open road.

"One day when th' kid was at school, this here long-lost brother of his'n come home. Some kind soul had whispered to the boy's father that th' returned one had just got outer a prison somewheres in th' glorious West, an' th' old man, being afflicted with a kind of religion in which there wasn't no such thing as forgive, he cussed his son out vi'lently an' run him offen th' ranch, which same was a truck farm. Sloker, he swore a cuss on th' prodigal an' never even cooked him a piece of beefsteak. Also an' moreover, th' old flint-heart laid down a law that th' name o' th' black sheep must never be mentioned a-tall by his folks.

"Th' kid hears of it all an' it soaked through his bean most readily, being right interesting dope at that, an' according to th' rules an' regulations of life laid down by our most cordially despised citizens, it should 'ave kept him close to th' fireplace; but it didn't, Sloker. All that 'cuss ye' stuff made th' kid worship his brother like he was Cap'n Kidd, Davy Crockett an' Buffalo Bill all in one. He told me he felt something pulling at him to go away from there. Even th' wind talked to him, telling him 'bout th' strange places he had seen in his dreams.

"In th' woods near his home th' kid met up with a bo. They got sorter acquainted, an' th' bo told him grand tales of th' freedom of th' road. Th' bo must 'ave been as absent-minded as one of 'em professors we read 'bout, for he forgot to even make mention of th' hard lines when things is breaking bad.

"For two-three days th' kid played at bo-ing, an' sneaked grub from his home, an' th' pair helt out as pals, though th' kid went home at night. Then th' kid's old man got wise that he was playing hookey from th' reading, writing, an' rithmetic factory, an' he whaled him good an' plenty for th' evading of his education. Th' kid busted loose. He beat it with his new pal, who was called Norfolk Jack.

"Soon th' kid got so he could brace a back door with th' best of 'em. Then this here Norfolk Jack showed him his line. He was a yegg, all right. Th' kid didn't have nothing special against th' trade, an' th' yegg promised to learn him th' business.

"One night he told th' kid that they was due to collect a bundle of Uncle Sammy's purty green an' red stickers. Th' kid was more'n ready. He'd got to be a purty tough baby by this time, I reckon. Th' yegg drilled him careful, an' they set out for a hick town which was near by. They camped in th' mouth of a tunnel, 'bout a mile outer th' town, till after midnight, an' then they went in. Th' kid was to watch while Norfolk Jack cracked th' box, an' signal if he seen anything wrong. In case things broke bad, th' kid was to hustle to th' tunnel an' wait.

"From what th' kid told me, it must 'ave been a good night for th' job. Th' yegg left him on lookout an' crawled through a window of th' store in which th' post office was located, an' 'bout five minutes later th' kid heard a awful racket inside. He reckoned that Norfolk Jack had struck a snag.

"Th' kid done what you an' me would 'ave done. He went away from there. He turned a corner into th' street that would lead him outer th' town, an' popped right into th' arms of a hick bull. Th' kid tried his little best to make his getaway, but th' bull knocked th' fight outer him with a billy. He slipped th' cuffs onto th' kid an' hustled him back to th' stamp emporium, where they found another town bull an' th' guy what handled th' stickers.

"From th' gabfest that went on, th' kid found out that th' stamp guy slept in th' store, an' when Norfolk Jack crawled in, he jumped him. Th' village merchant soon found out that he'd tackled a live one, for th' yegg impolitely busted him one on his jaw, an' broke away. Th' three of 'em turned on th' kid, who stood there blubbering. He was in a stew all right.

"Well, to cut it short, th' kid squealed—an' squealed proper, Sloker. He swore that Norfolk Jack had beat hin an' made him help with th' job; that he didn't have nothing to do with th' play for th' stamps, an' all th' rest of th' dope. Of course 'em hardheads didn't believe all that stuff th' kid slipped 'em. They told him he was

good for ten years at th' least, an' when they saw his nerve was broke, they promised him they'd turn him loose if he'd lead 'em to th' place where he was to meet his pal; that is, they'd turn him loose if they bagged Norfolk Jack.

"It was near morning by then, an' one of th' bulls wanted to wait till daylight an' get some more reinforcements. But th' guy what had been busted on th' jaw must 'ave ached for revenge, for he wanted to start right then. He was skeered th' yeggs would get leery of waiting an' beat it. So th' three of 'em took th' kid an' started down th' railroad track for th' tunnel.

"As Norfolk Jack afterwards told th' kid,—when he beat it from th' store, he didn't go far. He was a nervy cuss, you got to hand him that. When th' kid was doing th' squealing ack, th' yegg was hid near 'em list'ning, an' when th' bulls started for th' tunnel, Norfolk Jack went that way, too. He'd made up his mind to get th' kid away from 'em.

"'Bout two-thirds way to th' tunnel was a string of empties, an' th' yegg lifted his feet an' got there a while before th' bulls. He hid between two cars an' waited till th' bulls passed him with th' kid in their midst. Then he jumped out behind 'em. From what th' kid said, he must 'ave been a swift hand with th' jack. He crowned th' two hindmost ones before they had a idea they had company a-tall. Th' storekeeper was in front, he being th' most keen for th' hunt, an' he had just time to turn an' work his gat once before Norfolk Jack reached for him. Th' blackjack slapped th' gun outer his hand an' he hauled it for th' town.

"But that lonesome bullet was th' ace what copped th' trick. It smashed th' yegg's knee-cap. Th' kid stood there while th' ruction was goin' on, but he went to Norfolk Jack when he crumpled. He helped th' hurt man up, an' they made th' tunnel mouth somehow."

Ed turned to th' boy, who sat listening, th' muscles of his face twitching.

"You tell it now, kid," Ed suggested.

"When we got to th' tunnel," the youth began, in a voice strangely like a girl's, "Jack must 'ave fainted from th' pain. He groaned all th' way, dragging his leg an' kinder hopping while he leaned on me. I didn't know what to do. I was skeered he was dead. In a little while daylight come, an' Jack moaned an' opened his eyes. He turned his head an' seen me.

"'You beat it, kid,' he whispered, like he was weak. 'You beat it an' beat it quick!'

"I didn't like to leave him like that, but he cursed me an' drove me outer th' tunnel, an' 'twas then I seen a big gang of men coming up th' railroad track from th' town. They stopped where Jack had took me away from th' bulls, an' then they begun to follow th' trail of blood that had dripped from Jack's leg clean up to th' tunnel.

"I run back in an' told Jack they was coming. He looked at me kinder funny, an' then dragged hisself behind a big stone that stuck out at th' bottom of th' wall. Then he—he told me.

"'I'm your brother John, kid,' he said 'It's no use in you beating it through th' tunnel now. You can't do much for yourself, an' they'd get you before th' day is gone. It's up to me to get you clear, an' by God, I'll do it!'

"Th' gang by this time had come up to th' tunnel mouth, an' they stood there an' talked. Then some of 'em made as if to come in.

"'You keep back!' Jack hollered, an' he fired his gun in th' air.

"'Surrender!' one of 'em hollered back. 'You ain't got a chance. We got th' other end of th' tunnel covered. We're bound to get you!'

"'I'll get some of you first,' Jack told 'em.

"They cut loose at us, an' the tunnel must 'ave been full of lead, but we laid behind th' rock. They didn't come no nearer. They had us cornered, but none of 'em dared to as much as stick his whiskers in th' tunnel. Jack would 'ave burnt 'em. For 'bout a hour, things was like that, an' then Jack called to me.

"'Kid, I'm a goner,' he said. 'But here's where you beat th' game. You take my gun an' cover me, an' when I

tell you to, you call 'em to come in an' get me. Tell 'em you've been watching your chance to get me all th' time. You told 'em I made you help me, didn't you?'

"He knew I had, an' didn't wait for no answer.

"'That makes th' play good,' Jack went on, 'Tell 'em I took you from 'em to beat you for squealing. That'll let you out.'

"'But what 'bout you, Jack?' I asked him. 'You might get me outer it, but you'll have to go to prison. They won't let you go free.'

"'I promise you I ain't going to no prison,' Jack told me. 'Don't you worry 'bout me. I can take care of myself. Now, boy, make th' play good for th' sake of our folks. Your father did treat me like a dog, but that wan't no excuse for me trying to make a crook outer you. When all this is over and done with, you go home an' stay there, an' when you think to hit th' road again, remem Norfolk Jack, an' don't.'

"What with him telling me he's my brother John, an' me being awful skeered, anyhow, I begin to cry, an' he twisted my arm till it hurt.

"'Brace up, brother,' he said. 'Do what I told you. Shake hands, now, man to man.'

"He give me his gun an' stood up on his good leg an' braced hisself against th' wall. Then I called 'em. At first they was skeered to come in, but at last one of 'em, th' sheriff, he come in a inch at a time. He looked at me an' Jack, an' then called to two of his men, an' they all walked in, their guns ready in their hands. Jack was standing against th' wall, his hands in th' air, an' I had his gun pointed at him. I said what Jack had told me to.

"Th' sheriff cursed an' pulled me away from in front of Jack, an' covered him hisself. Jack looked him square in th' eyes, though he didn't say nothing. Then Jack let his right arm drop down to his hip like he was going to pull a gun. Th' sheriff shot him. They was surprised when they found out that Jack didn't have no gun. Jack slid down from against th' wall an' died right there. I knew then what he meant when he said he wasn't going to prison again."

The boy's words ended with a great sob, and his head dropped to the table. Bitter tears scalded his eyes.

"Poor little cuss," Sloker commiserated.

"That, Sloker," Ed remarked, "was th' biggest minute in th' hard guy's life. He lived hard an' he died hard, but he played a losing hand like it orter be played.

"They turned th' kid loose an' told him to beat it. Now I ain't exactly notorious for th' bigness of my heart, but I plainly seen when th' kid unloaded on me, that 'twas up to me to see that he got home. 'Twould 'ave been a awful pity if Jack's last play flivvered because th' kid was a baby. He was liable to be picked up anywheres along th' line.

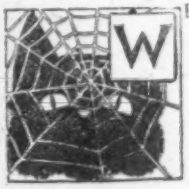
"There ain't no railroad ever yet declared a dividend because Richmond Ed rode, but tomorrer I'm goner buy me two railroad tickets to Norfolk. There's one poor fish down there I want to give th' onct-over, Sloker. I want to see what th' guy looks like who is pals with a bible an' can't find in it no forgiveness. An' in the future when I meet any man what favors him, I'm goner steer clear of that party."

NEXT month: THE BLINDNESS OF COURAGE *by Earl G. Curtis*, the fourth of "The Pardners of Wander Inn" stories.

ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT OF WEASEL

BY FRANCIS W. DEVER

After robbing his mother night afer night to settle his gambling debts, an adopted son tries to square himself with the aid of a sandbag.



HERE Mary Ellen Magee lived, the frayed edge of a great American city sopped itself in the waters of an unquiet river. There gaunt, hopeless children played and frowzy goats subsisted, though what they subsisted upon was a problem, admissable, it seems, of only God's solution. Little there was above this blotch of desolation, where the city dumped rubbish, save sporadic shacks, dingy and decadent shelters of a people to whom life could be hardly more than a Sisyphean grind.

Withered and bowed and pock-marked was Mary Ellen. Very grotesque she appeared that night with her faded mohair waist and her sagging skirt, shuffling her angulate seventy years across the bleak floor. And very pathetic, too, as to the street door she turned a trouble-grooved and anxious countenance. Outside a lumbering step omened the entrance of a stocky, well thewed fellow. It was Mary Ellen's adopted son, Michael, or Weasel, as the neighborhood knew him. He had come home ugly with drink, his crass, gray face contorted evilly.

"Get me a bite to eat, and take a sneak, ye shrivelled old hag," he bawled, seating himself heavily at the table. "Ye're hard to look upon, wid yer crooked back and yer scabby face. Hurry and get out, I say; ye're hurtin' me eyes."

Tearfully Mary Ellen ignored the tirade.

"Michael, do ye know we're bein' sheriffed out Monday a week?"

"Yes, I heard about it, ye worthless, extravagant crone. Serves ye right. I'm hungry, I tell ye."

"There's nothin' in the house, boy. I thought ye'd be eatin' at Leary's. Ye generally do on a Saturday night."

"Ain't the store full of grub—what ails ye?"

"Yes, but there's a sheriff's seal on the door. We couldn't break that, boy."

"Seals be damned," roared Weasel, getting up. In front of the door the old woman planted herself, with a brave show of firmness. Weasel swung viciously; whirling her into a crumpled heap beyond the table. He drove the door in with a savage kick, staggered into the store; and emerged, arms full of crackers, cheese and the like.

Mary Ellen dragged herself into a chair, and sat, all atremble; yet through the fear in her eyes a mothering love glowed, tragic in its vitality, a love that had survived years and years of abuse and disappointment.

It was more than twenty years since Policeman Givetti had found mewling on some one's doorstep an abandoned baby boy whose adoption by Mary Ellen was easily arranged. She had him christened Michael, after a deceased relative.

No mother could have devoted more care and patience to her own child than Mary Ellen devoted to Michael. But some accursed atavism must have held the boy in its influence. Throughout his boyhood he was to her a well of worry and tribulation. Her affection he never returned; the neighbors detested him; and practically his whole youth was passed as a member of a notorious river gang. At twenty-one he was a boozer, a gambler, a petty crook. The sobriquet of Weasel he received from the river gang, for even they could not subscribe to his habit of tapping Mary Ellen's till. Three times he

had been arrested on a minor charge, three times Mary Ellen's earnest plea had softened the magistrate into letting the transgressor off with a fine (paid by Mary Ellen, of course,) and an admonition that was sure to be unheeded. Fourth time, though, sentence was pronounced and suspended with the magistrate's grim promise that next time Weasel faced him, that erring young man would go to the pen, and go there for a good long stay.

As far as the community at large was concerned, this had upon Weasel a salutary effect. In the grip of the gambling mania, however, he made even greater inroads into the grocery till, in spite of Mary Ellen's pleas, remonstrances and threats. And now the inevitable day had come when a man from the sheriff's office took over the little business and billed it to be sold within ten days.

Hunger sated, Weasel, maundering angrily, left the house. What with the food and the crisp air he began to sober a bit. With the return of his reason it dawned on him how serious in itself was the breaking of the door; and how much more serious in his case, with one foot already in the pen.

Too, he began to feel a trifle uneasy about his treatment of Mary Ellen. It was not alone because he had abused her. His blows and his vituperation she had ever suffered with a meekness that almost engendered his contempt. But he experienced a mild regret that he had not been more considerate at this time when so much bad luck had befallen her.

An amorphous plan in mind to fix the door, somehow, and to offer Mary Ellen, —not an apology exactly, but a surly intimation of regret, Weasel stopped short of his destination (Leary's saloon), and returned to the store.

Hearing voices within, stealthily he tiptoed to the side of the house. He had no desire to meet visitors just then. Through the blinds and the dingy window he peered into the dim interior. Seated across the room was Mary Ellen; beside her sat Mrs. Nolan, a neighbor. Their words reached Weasel clearly through a broken pane in the window.

"Well I remember the day ye told me ye were goin' to adopt him," Mrs. Nolan was speaking. "'Since no man would marry an ugly crooked creature like meself,' says ye, 'I'll take this fine little chap to raise.' They're the words, exactly. And what did I say to ye? Didn't I say: 'Take the advice of a woman that's carried eight and leave the raisin' of brats to them that has the time and the health and to them that has the necessity?' But ye adopted him; and it was a black day ye did, the scoundrel. Satan himself couldn't have given ye more trouble. An' now, after all he's done ye try to shield him."

"I'll have ye speak respectful of the lad. There's far worse *flesh-and-blood* sons nor Michael. I tell ye again: it was me that broke the door—"

"You!" scoffed Mrs. Nolan. "Why ye poor thing, ye couldn't even bend it. Tell the truth, now; don't be makin' a crook of yerself."

"Crook or no crook, I did it," shrilled Mary Ellen. "What right had that snake of a constable to lock me out of my own store? The devil take him, and you, too. I battered the door down with an axe. And if ye wag yer lyin' tongue again to say that Michael did it, I'll—I'll put ye out."

Then he was Mary Ellen's adopted son! Weasel started back across the lots. He felt that this startling revelation could best be coped with over a dram of Leary's whiskey. He knew himself to be a bad lot. His attitude toward Mary Ellen heretofore had been that as she had brought him into the world, she would have to put up with him. Morose and cynical of nature, and conscious of his innate predisposition to evil, he had censured rather than thanked her whom he believed to be the agent of his destiny.

But now Mary Ellen stood in a different light. Here was an old woman who had submerged nearly everything from self-respect to self-preservation,—for what? Weasel sought in vain for some selfish motive she might have had. It was difficult for his inverted psychology to grasp the true motive for her sacrifice, nevertheless it did, finally, and before he had

gone much further the old feeling for her of half-contempt was supplanted by a grudging admiration, and then in turn came remorse, a sensation curious and new. The further he travelled, the more firmly and profanely he tried to be rid of it, the more this sensation obsessed him. He gave way to it, and for the second time that night he stopped short of Leary's, and returned to the store. As before, he made his silent way to the window. Mary Ellen, alone in the room, was crouched in prayer.

"With three score years and nine at me back," she was saying, "I've taken the bumps and bruises of life with never a grumble, while for the better things I've always given ye thanks. And for meself I'd ask ye nought. What ever heavy burdens ye have for me twisted old back I'll carry with Christian meekness. But Father of Heaven I visit ye this night in sore distress for Michael. What's to be the end of him with the store gone and me with no way to care for him, I'm sorely disquieted to think. He's well enough meant, O Lord, I'm sure; but he's weak and he's never known a father's counsel. So, O Great Creator, please lead him into better ways. Amen."

Weasel relaxed not a muscle until Mary Ellen had finished. Then a sickening feeling of self resentment came over him; then a feeble effort to fight it. His legs palsied under the weight of his iniquities. He became as a man beset with smoke, his mind working desperately and with the speed of light, picking here and there for the way out. At last he straightened, threw back his head; there was a sibilant intake of breath; and he hurried away, firm and steady with the strength of an unalterable purpose.

At the side door of Belden's gambling house a half hour after, there was a low peculiar tapping, a low, cautious inquiry, a quiet reply, and Weasel was permitted to enter.

"Where's Belden?" he inquired of the man at the door.

"In the back room."

Weasel went into the back room. A coarse, plethoric man, with small eyes, his fingers and shirt-front aflame with oversize gems, was resting easily at a small desk.

"Well, Weasel," he greeted, "what's the news?"

"I'd like to see ye where we won't be disturbed," Weasel answered. "Where will it be?"

In the rear of the alley, a moment later, Weasel got to his business without formality. "I'd like the loan of two hundred dollars."

Weasel was a good customer; Belden repressed an ironical reply. "Wish I could help you, my boy," he purred. "Why I'm practically broke, myself. There isn't the money in this game you'd think, Weasel. Overhead expenses eat up the profits. Protection mostly. You wouldn't believe—"

Weasel had heard enough. Next moment there was a soft impact,—the impact of a sand-bag on Belden's head. Weasel pulled the unconscious man behind a pile of old lumber in the yard and took a roll of bills from Belden's pocket. He peered cautiously over the fence, and, seeing clear ground, vaulted to the open lots.

Old Maxwell Jorden was known to every crook in the city as a lawyer who would go even beyond the bounds of legal ethics to clear a client, yet, oddly enough as one who refused to take advantage of any man.

When Weasel left Belden's, he hurried to Jorden's office, finding the old man, as he had expected, at work in the musty cluttered room.

"About two years ago the old woman fell for a pool of water disguised as a lot at Ozone Heights," Weasel explained to the lawyer. "I misdoubt if the land is worth five dollars, which is neither here nor there. What I want you to do is to go see her tomorrow. Tell her ye represent some big concern—I don't care what—that needs her land, and is willin' to pay her two hundred dollars for it. Here's the two hundred, and,"—peeling twenty-five more from Belden's roll,—"here's a good fee. Ye won't fail me?"

"I'll attend to the matter in the morning.

And you will return for the deed?"

"Keep it. Some day ye might need the lot for a fish preserve."

Outside, Weasel sought a telephone booth, and called Belden's place. Yes, Belden was in; but he'd been hurt in an accident. Would the party leave a message? "No, not very serious—"

Weasel hung up in relief. He wanted no murder on his soul. As he wandered toward the river his mind became more and more chaotic. After the first sweet thought of his accomplishment, the instinct of self-preservation took hold of him. He knew nowhere but the city; in fact, aside from the river district, he knew little of that. Well, he would have to hide somewhere; better, perhaps, get out of town. Belden would squeal, he knew. The gambling factor would never enter into the matter. Gang ethics would prohibit that.

An unfriendly hail caused him to turn. It was Bemis, the cop, coming toward him rapidly. Weasel broke into a run; Bemis too.

"Halt!" yelled Bemis.

Weasel ran only the faster. One thing he had in mind: he must reach the river. Once there, among the wharves, he could no doubt elude the officer.

"Halt!" Bemis repeated. "Halt, or I'll plug ye!" He fired.

At the sound of the shot, Weasel knew that Bemis would have company. Sure enough, a moment later there were five or six officers and as many citizens in the chase. At short intervals the guns spat for moral effect. A night stick, thrown by one of the officers, hit Weasel in the middle of the back. He swung suddenly, sharply, into Miller's Wharf; but before he could reach the protecting gloom of the wharf sheds, Bemis, plunging after him, fired one well-aimed shot. Weasel felt the sting of lead in his shoulder, stumbled, recovered himself, and staggered behind a barrier of heaped-up bags of ballast.

Up to this time no thought of using his own gun had occurred to him, but now the cornered-rat instinct prompted him to draw it. "Ye're close enough," he yelled; "put foot on the wharf, and ye drop."

The crowd halted, the shooting stopped; one of the officers began deploying the others and some of the men. Weasel knew that there was no chance of his getting away. There were thirty feet of open wharf between him and the water, and little to gain by reaching the water. To jail he would not go; that he promised himself. They had methods there of getting at the truth of things,—methods terribly efficient. Under them he might weaken, and the night's work would be wasted No, he would fight it out to the end. Hot blood, a rill of it, almost, was running down his shoulder. That couldn't last long. If he should faint, the crowd would get him alive. Throwing the remainder of Belden's roll a dozen ways in the night wind, Weasel rose unsteadily from his barricade, voiced a shrill, eerie yell of defiance, the battle-cry of the river gang, and began firing high, toward the crowd. Twice only he fired before he dropped, lead in his lung, lead in his stomach, and in his shoulder. Into the ears of the man who picked him up he gasped. "Tell the old woman that I died with the fear of God in me heart, and with sorrow for the wrongs I done her and ask her to pray for me soul."

Mary Ellen, through all her vicissitudes, had managed to keep up Weasel's insurance. It was not much, but it buried him. One hundred and sixty dollars of the money she received "for the lot" took the sheriff's bill off the store; and her trade increased threefold.

It was in March that Weasel was killed. One morning in early June Mary Ellen found her way to St. Joseph's orphanage. To the Mother Superior who answered her ring she explained: "I'd like to be arrangin' for the adoptin' of a baby, a nice little baby boy."

And as she had called the first, so she called the second, Michael.

(*Continued from page 2*)

the start. It lends itself to a vein of sentiment, and it is treated in such a way that even the caustic masculine critic would not confuse it with purile sentimentality. The story loses somewhat through careless handling of material. The entire action hinges on the Captain's medicine chest, with the pills capable of producing seasickness, yet no reason is shown for his possession of such pills. If it is true, as is shown at the end, that it was a picture of the corporation president's wife that made the Captain save the "Miranda," then he surely could not have foreseen the mutiny of the crew and provided himself with the necessary pills.

Unmasking Cleo is a laugh-provoking story exaggerating the proposition that if one sets one's heart on the acquisition of a certain thing, one is prone to overlook faults in that thing, faults which, were it not so desirable, would stand out prominently. The story has practically no complication. There is little or no rising and falling action; the reader scents no climax, even early in the story. It is just a straight narrative, and the brightest spots are the satirical retorts of the narrating character.

The Love Offering is excellent from the standpoint of characterization and sympathetic treatment. The writer is a painter in words, and the pathetic little tale is a succession of lovely pictures. One visualizes the scene under the blossomy catalpa tree and the journey through the swamp and over the cypress knees. The child's eyelashes "of ravelled silk" is an exquisite touch. The author's method of marshalling past events for the enlightenment of the reader by describing Helaire's troubled dream is a good device. The viewpoint is that of Helaire throughout, and the dream and his reflections make the time of action continuous. It is interesting to note the author's successful, though overdone, side-stepping of the word "say." The speakers pray, groan, drag out, conclude, invite, interrogate, inform, advance, introduce, assure, and even ask, tell and add,—but never say. The climax is almost too dramatic. It needs only the return of Fortinot and his family to his ancestral home, with a few old servants in the background, to make the story a remarkably good film scenario.

As a study of the psychology of hatred, *The Engineer and the Pilot* falls far below the prize winning story. The theme is not handled so convincingly or sympathetically. The enmity between the drawmen and the boat's crew is not convincing, for men in positions of responsibility do not, just for spite, wantonly endanger the lives and property entrusted to them. Moreover, they are well aware of the penalties of criminal negligence. None of the characters deserve sympathy. The woman's trickery is inexcusable. The pilot has no excuse for coveting another man's promised wife in a world that is filled with women; and for the same reason, the engineer has no excuse for brooding over his loss until he drives himself insane. The story is melodramatic; it could not be otherwise.

The Eleventh Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (October); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before November 1st. Prizes will be awarded November 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the January BLACK CAT, issued December 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

A PRIZE of $10. will be awarded to the member sending in the best criticism.

A PRIZE of $5. will be awarded to the member sending in the next best criticism.

PRIZES of $2.50 EACH will be awarded to members whose criticisms rank third and fourth in the contest.

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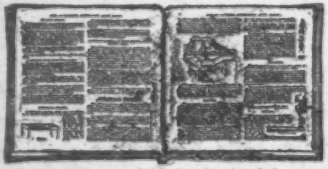

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